

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ
ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ
ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ & Μ. ΒΡΕΤΑΝΝΙΑΣ

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
ARCHDIOCESE OF
THYATEIRA & GREAT BRITAIN



ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ THE WORD OF OUR LORD



ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΕΛΩΝΟΥ & ΦΑΡΙΣΑΙΟΥ
(Αρχή Τριωδίου) 9 Φεβρουαρίου 2025
Ἦχος πλ. δ'. Ἀριθμ. 267

SUNDAY OF TAX-COLLECTOR & PHARISEE
(Triodion begins) 9 February 2025
Plagal of the 4th Mode. No. 267

*Νικηφόρου μάρτυρος, Παγκρατίου ἐπισκόπου Ταυρομενίου, Μαρκέλλου ἐπισκόπου, Φιλαγρίου ἐπισκόπου Πάφου
Nicephorus martyr, Marcellus martyr, Philagrius & Pancratius*

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Β' Τιμ. γ', 10-15

Τέκνον Τιμόθεε, παρηκολούθηκάς μου τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, τῇ ἀγωγῇ, τῇ προθέσει, τῇ πίστει, τῇ μακροθυμίᾳ, τῇ ἀγάπῃ, τῇ ὑπομονῇ, τοῖς διωγμοῖς, τοῖς παθήμασιν, οἷά μοι ἐγένετο ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ, ἐν Ἰκονίῳ, ἐν Λύστροις, οἷους διωγμοὺς ὑπήνεγκα· καὶ ἐκ πάντων με ἐρρύσατο ὁ Κύριος. Καὶ πάντες δὲ οἱ θέλοντες εὖσεβῶς ζῆν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διωχθήσονται. Πονηροὶ δὲ ἄνθρωποι καὶ γόητες προκόψουσιν ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον, πλανῶντες καὶ πλανώμενοι. Σὺ δὲ μένε ἐν οἷς ἔμαθες καὶ ἐπιστώθης, εἰδὼς παρὰ τίνος ἔμαθες, καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ βρέφους τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα οἶδας, τὰ δυνάμενά σε σοφίσαι εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

Ἦχος πλ. δ'.

Ἐξ ὕψους κατήλθες ὁ εὖσπλαγχνος, ἑταφὴν κατεδέξω τριήμερον, ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἐλευθερώσης τῶν παθῶν. Ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡμῶν, Κύριε, δόξα σοι.

Payer is doxology, praise, thanksgiving, confession, supplication and intercession to God. "When I prayed I was new", wrote a great theologian of Christian antiquity, "but when I stopped praying I became old". Prayer is the way to renewal and spiritual life. Prayer is aliveness to God. Prayer is strength, refreshment, and joy. Through the grace of God and our disciplined efforts prayer lifts us up from our isolation to a conscious, loving communion with God in which everything is experienced in a new light. Prayer becomes a personal dialogue with God, a spiritual breathing of the soul, a foretaste of the bliss of God's kingdom.

EPISTLE READING

2 Tim. 3: 10-15

Timothy, my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconion, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

Plagal of the 4th Mode

You the Compassionate came down from above, you accepted burial for three days, that you might free us from the passions. Our life and resurrection, Lord, glory to you!

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Λουκ. ιη', 10-14

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην· Ἄνθρωποι δύο ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν προσεύξασθαι, ὁ εἷς Φαρισαῖος καὶ ὁ ἕτερος τελώνης. ὁ Φαρισαῖος σταθεῖς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ταῦτα προσηύχετο· ὁ Θεός, εὐχαριστῶ σοι ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ ὡσπερ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἄρπαγες, ἄδικοι, μοιχοί, ἢ καὶ ὡς οὗτος ὁ τελώνης· νηστεύω δις τοῦ σαββάτου, ἀποδεκατῶ πάντα ὅσα κτῶμαι. καὶ ὁ τελώνης μακρόθεν ἐστὼς οὐκ ἤθελεν οὐδὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐπάραι, ἀλλ' ἔτυπεν εἰς τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ λέγων· ὁ Θεός, ἰλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ. λέγω ὑμῖν, κατέβη οὗτος δεδικαιωμένος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ ἢ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος· ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται.

GOSPEL READING

Luke 18: 10-14

The Lord said this parable, Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΥ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑΤΟΣ

«Σταθεῖς πρὸς ἑαυτόν, ταῦτα προσηύχετο»

Δοξάζουμε τὴν Τρισυπόστατο Θεότητα ὅπου μᾶς ἀξίωσε νὰ ἔλθομεν εἰς τὸ εὐλογημένο Τριῶδιο, τὴν προετοιμασία γιὰ τὴν Ἁγία καὶ Μεγάλῃ Σαρακοστή, περίοδον ἐντατικῆς πνευματικῆς προετοιμασίας γιὰ νὰ προϋπαντήσομεν τὸν ἀναστάντα Κύριον εἰς τὴν καρδιά μας.

Ἡ παραβολὴ τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου ἐρευνᾷ τὸ θεμελιῶδες ἐρώτημα τῆς σωτηρίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀντιδιαστέλλοντας τὰ πρότυπα δύο ἀνθρώπων, τοῦ Τελώνου καὶ τοῦ Φαρισαίου. Ἄς ἐξετάσουμε κατ' ἀρχὰς τὰ κοινὰ χαρακτηριστικὰ τῶν δύο αὐτῶν προτύπων. Καὶ οἱ δύο πιστεύουν στὸν Θεὸ γιὰ τὸ καὶ οἱ δύο προσεύχονται. Καὶ οἱ δύο πηγαίνουν στὴν συναγωγὴ καὶ οἱ δύο λατρεύουν τὸν Θεὸ γιὰ τὸ βρῖσκονται στὸ «ἱερὸν». Καὶ ὅμως μόνον ὁ Τελώνης σώζεται; Τὸ πρῶτο ἐπομένως μῆνυμα τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου εἶναι ὅτι ἡ πίστη στὸ Θεὸ καὶ ὁ ἐκκλησιασμός παρ' ὅτι ἀπαραίτητα ἀπὸ μόνον τους δὲν ἐγγυοῦνται τὴν σωτηρία.

Ἄς κοιτάξουμε τώρα τὴν διαφορὰ τῶν δύο. Αὐτὴ προσδιορίζεται ἀπὸ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο στὸ περιεχόμενο τῆς προσευχῆς, σὰν μαρτυρία τῆς κατάστασης τῆς καρδίας τους. Ὁ Φαρισαῖος αἰσθάνεται ὅτι εἶναι « ἐντάξει» ἀπέναντι τὸν Θεὸ γιὰ τὸ ἀκολουθεῖ τὶς τυπικὲς διατάξεις τῆς θρησκείας, νηστεύει καὶ κάνει ἐλεημοσύνη. Ὁ Τελώνης ἀντίθετα βιώνει μὲ ἔντονο πόνο - «ἔτυπεν τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ» - στὴν καρδιά του τὰ λόγια τοῦ Δαυὶδ «Ἐγὼ δὲ εἰμι σκώληξ καὶ οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, ὄνειδος ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἐξουθένημα λαοῦ» (Ψαλμ. ιθ' 7). Ὁ Φαρισαῖος μὲ αὐτάρκεια - «σταθεῖς πρὸς ἑαυτόν» - περιαιτολογεῖ καὶ ὑψώνει ἑαυτὸν ἐνῶ ὁ Τελώνης «μακρόθεν» ἰκετεύει καὶ ταπεινώνεται, «οὐκ ἤθελε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐπάραι». Ὁ Φαρισαῖος κατηγορεῖ μέσα του τὸν ἀδελφὸ του ἐνῶ ὁ Τελώνης εἶναι αἰσθάνεται τόσο συντετριμμένος ἀπὸ τὴν δική του ἀθλιότητα πού δὲν ἔχει δύναμη νὰ κοιτάξει τοὺς ἄλλους. Στὶς διαφορὰς αὐτὲς πρέπει λοιπὸν νὰ εὐρίσκεται ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ ἐνός καὶ ἡ καταδίκη τοῦ ἄλλου.

Ἡ αὐτάρκεια τῆς ψυχῆς πού αἰσθάνεται δικαιομένη μὲ κάποια ἔργα ἀνεξάρτητα ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ καὶ ἀνώτερη ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους πάσχει ἀπὸ ὑπερηφάνεια. Ἀντίθετα ἡ ψυχὴ πού βιώνει συντριβὴ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ νοιώθει παντελῶς ἀνάξια νὰ σηκώσει τὰ μάτια στὸν οὐρανὸ κοσμεῖται μὲ τὴν ἁγία ταπεινώση. Ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰσαάκ ὑπέροχα συγκεφαλαιώνει τὴν μονα-

δική ἀξία τῆς ταπεινώσης λέγοντας ὅτι εἶναι «ἡ στολή τῆς θεότητος» (Λόγος κ'). Ὁ Κύριος ὅταν θέλησε νά φανερωθεῖ στους ἀνθρώπους καί γνωρίζοντας τήν ἀθλιότητα στήν ὁποῖαν εἶχαμε περιπέσει φόρεσε τήν οὐσία μας γενόμενος τέλειος ἄνθρωπος παραμένοντας τέλειος Θεός. Φανερώθηκε σέ μᾶς καί γιά χάρη μας μέ ταπεινώση καλύπτοντας τήν ἀπρόσιτη θεότητα Του μέ τήν πεπερασμένη ἀνθρωπότητά μας. Ἔδειξε μέ αὐτόν τόν τρόπο ὅτι γιά νά σωθοῦμε πρέπει καί ἐμεῖς νά ταπεινωθοῦμε.

Ἡ ἀγία ταπεινώση πηγάζει βαθεῖα ἀπό τήν καρδιά σάν συναίσθηση τῆς ἀσθένειάς της ὅπως διδάσκει ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰσαάκ «Μακάριος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος, ὅστις ἐγνώρισεν τήν ἰδίαν αὐτοῦ ἀσθένειαν» (Λόγος κα'). Ὅταν ὁ ἄνθρωπος αισθανθεῖ πέρα ἀπό ὑποκρισία καί προσποίηση τήν ἀδυναμία νά νικήσει τά πάθη καί τίς κακίες τότε ἡ ψυχή συντρίβεται καί πονάει. Ὁ πόνος διώχνει τήν πνευματική ἀναισθησία καί χαύνωση τῆς καρδίας, καί γεννάει πνευματική ἐπαγρύπνηση καί ἐγρήγορη.

Ὁ ἄνθρωπος δέν μπορεῖ νά αισθανθεῖ τήν «ἰδίαν ἀσθένειαν» χωρίς τήν χάριν τοῦ Κυρίου κατά τό εὐαγγελικό «Χωρίς Ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθαι ποιεῖν οὐδέν» (Ἰω. ιε' 5-6) καί «Πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθή καί πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστι καταβαῖνον ἀπό τοῦ Πατρός τῶν φώτων» (Ἰακ. 1, 17). Ὁ Θεός εἰς τήν ἀνυπέβλητον ἀγάπη Του γιά τό ἐξαθλιωμένο πλάσμα του παραχωρεῖ νά πέσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος σέ ψυχικούς καί σωματικούς πειρασμούς ἀνάλογους μέ τήν δύναμη του. Οἱ πειρασμοί σάν τά κύματα τῆς θάλασσας ξεβράζουν μέ τόν χρόνο τά νεκρά ψάρια καί τίς ἀκαθαρσίες στήν ἐπιφάνεια, κάνουν τήν ψυχή νά γνωρίσει τί λογῆς πάθη καί κακίες κρύβει βαθεῖα μέσα της. Ἡ ψυχή βιώνοντας τήν στέρηση τῆς βοήθειας τοῦ Θεοῦ προσεύχεται, ἰκετεύει καί ταπεινώνεται. Καί τότε ἔρχεται σέ ἐπίγνωση τῆς μεγαλωσύνης τοῦ Θεοῦ κατά τό ψαλμικό «Καρδίαν συντετριμμένην καί τεταπεινωμένην ὁ Θεός οὐκ ἐξουδενώσει» (Ψαλμ. ν') γιὰτί μόλις ἡ καρδιά ταπεινωθεῖ βαθεῖα αισθάνεται τό ἔλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἔρχεται ἡ θεία βοήθεια καί γεμίζει χαρά, θάμβος καί πίστη. Καί αὐτά μέ τήν σειρά τους δυναμώνουν ἀκόμη πῶς πολύ τήν προσευχή καί τήν πίστη, καί ἀνέρχεται ἡ ψυχή ἀπό χαρά καί θάμβος σέ χαρά καί θάμβος, καί γλυκαίνεται στήν προσευχή. Γίνεται ἡ προσευχή αὐτή ὁ θησαυρός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀσφαλισμένος ὄλο καί βαθύτερα στήν καρδίαν του μέχρις ὅτου πλέον «ἀναδίδει ἀκαταπαύστως τὰς εὐχαριστηρίους δεήσεις δι' ἀλαλήτων φωνῶν, κινούμενος ἐκ τῆς ὑπερβολικῆς γνώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, καί ἐκπληττόμενος διὰ τό ὑπερβάλλον τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ» (Λόγος κα'). Ἄς ἰκετεύσομεν καί ἐμεῖς ἀδελφοί τόν γλυκύτατον Ἰησοῦ, τόν Κύριόν μας καί Θεόν μας, νά μᾶς χαρίσει μέ τήν ἀγία ταπεινώση τέτοια προσευχή στήν καρδιά μας. Ἀμήν.

SERMON ON THE EPISTLE READING

This short parable is one of the best known, coming as it does, at the beginning of the period of the Triodion. This coming week is fast free reminding us not to pat ourselves on the back for how good we are, but to remind us that we should see humility like the Tax collector demonstrated as our aim in life and particularly now, as we embark on the Great Fast in a couple of weeks.

There is a current saying concerning humility of one of our most recent saints – St Silouan of the Holy Mountain – that is frequently quoted nowadays: “*Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not*”. The background to this saying is as follows. St Silouan was at the time a monk on Mt Athos seeking the hesychastic ideal of perpetual prayer and the vision of uncreated light. He was struggling to acquire humility and this saying “came into his soul” as an answer to prayer from God. With it came a vision of what Hell is like, and over the years he was able to frequently recover this vision to remind himself of his lack of humility and his need for further effort and Grace.

Can we apply this saying to our own lives, we who are not monks, nor on Mt Athos?

There are certain difficulties. The first is that without doubting St Silouan’s vision in any way, we need to accept that most visions that people receive are particular to that individual, in

the particular circumstances that they find themselves. They are given by God to an individual, to strengthen, warn and encourage. And it is a fact that when God speaks to us like this we see ourselves as we truly are, which can be unpleasant!

We cannot know why God granted this vision to St Silouan, but it has all the hallmarks of a personal revelation.

When recounting the phrase St Silouan used the Russian word for Hell, not Hades the place where the dead wait (see *Luke 16:23*), so it is the place of punishment that exists after the final judgement at the end of time. It is there for those of whom Christ says “*I never knew you!*” (*Matt.7:23*). Can we, who have not been granted St Silouan’s Vision have any true idea of what this state may be? In truth we cannot. We could however, attempt to imagine it. Hesychasts, like St Gregory Palamas and those whose writings are recorded in the Philokalia are very wary of imagination, and for good reason. If we try to imagine things that we can know virtually nothing about, like Hell, we will be led to distraction, depression and a drift away from the love of God.

The hesychasts were (and are) concerned to still the turmoil in our minds so that we move into a state where we discard our distracting thoughts and imagination and find “*the sound of a light breeze*” (*3 Reigns 19:12*) through which we communicate with God.

So, what then of the humility of the Tax Collector? Oddly, we can learn something from the Pharisee. He seems to know himself and this is vital for all of us. Forget the cardboard cut out we present to others, accept the sinful failure that we each are, but... and here is a very important BUT... for we must remember, that we have been given *so many gifts by God*. It is in our recognition of these gifts, the knowledge that we are absolutely nothing without them, brings us to give thanks to God. Sincere thanksgiving is the antidote to Pride! Truly then we can say “*God be merciful to me a sinner*”. (*Luke 18:13*) Hoping that one day we may hear his voice say “*Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your Lord!*” (*Matt. 25:21ff*).

Protopresbyter Stephen Maxfield



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We would like to thank you for visiting and worshiping with us today. Kindly know that although all are welcome to attend our Sacred Services, a prerequisite to receive Holy Communion is unity in the Faith, as well as spiritual preparation by prayer, fasting, and regular participation in the Sacrament of Holy Confession. Non-Orthodox Christians are kindly requested to refrain from receiving Communion. All are, however, welcome to partake of the “antidoron” (blessed bread) distributed by the clergy at the conclusion of the Service, as well as to introduce themselves while doing so.

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Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain, 5 Craven Hill, London W2 3EN
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