



Orthodox Church of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 W. Main Street Emmitsburg, MD
21727

<http://EntranceMission.org>

717-817-0084

The V. Rev. Elias Yelovich,
Rector

The Rev. Anthony Duvall,
Assistant

The God of Lost Causes November 19, 2023

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, ... making peace and reconciling us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 13:18)

St. Paul speaks of the changes that been brought to the lives of those who have been united to Christ. Previously, there was only hostility. Religious life before Christ might well be described as an endless means of trying to placate God. Certainly, this was true in the cultures that surrounded ancient Israel. The false gods of the Greeks, Romans, and the detestable false gods of the Canaanites, deeply despised by the people of Israel. These many idols and false gods, strongly opposed by the first commandment, were seen as powers that had to be placated, pleased. Some ancient religions even resorted to human sacrifice. We see evidence of this in the story of Abraham and the sacrifice of his son Isaac. In that ancient story, the boy is spared, not by Abraham having a change of heart, but by God Himself. It is God Himself who provides the sacrifice, overturning the ancient need to placate an angry god.

Even ancient Israel in the times prior to Christ likewise sought means to gain God's favor in rigid laws of purity, and in the attempt to earn righteousness by adherence to the many laws and rules of the Jewish temple. The Gospels provide many examples of our Lord teaching that it is the heart that must be changed, not merely the

outward adherence to this or that set of rules. St. Paul wrote clearly about the futility of trying to gain God's favor by adherence to the Law. He describes such hopeless attempts as having a relationship with God that is hostile. Like pay taxes that are levied, or doing this or that to placate the anger of a vengeful god. All of that has changed, he says, in the coming of Jesus Christ. Once we lived in fear and hostility; now we live in peace. Union with Him allows us who are unrighteous to be brought into the presence of the Lord and to experience now in this life signs of the New Life to come in His Kingdom that will never end.

This teaching of St. Paul is based on the revelation of Jesus Christ, a powerful demonstration of which we heard we heard in our Gospel lesson today. A woman with a disease, a hemorrhage of some sort that renders her unclean in the eyes of her Jewish religion, is healed. Power to heal comes forth from a mere touch of our Lord's garment. A child who dies is raised by our Lord with a mere word. "Talitha cumi: Little girl arise!" Both of these miracles are examples of hopeless situations that have been turned around; lost causes that have been renewed with the touch, the word of the Savior.

When we look at our lives, there is not one of us here who cannot say that we have not experienced hopeless situations. Incurable sickness, death that strikes one down in the prime of life, inability to better ourselves and change. Hopeless is all around us. But today's lessons surely must remind us that in Jesus Christ all things will be renewed, and the hopelessness we experience in this life will be turned into times of joy and mercy and love without end in His Kingdom. This is a very good word for us today! Given by our Lord's miracles of hope and renewal, and reiterated by the Great Apostle to us, the Gentiles! The wall of hostility between us and God has been broken and peace has been brought to those of us who were far off ... the peace of reconciliation and hope to all who had been hopeless!

To Jesus Christ be all honor and glory forever! Amen!

Fr. Elias

Orthodox Church of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

306 West Main Street

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

<https://EntranceMission.org>