



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life? January 31, 2021

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

What must I do to inherit eternal life? (Luke 18:18)

This question is at the heart of our Gospel lesson for Sunday. According to St. Luke a “certain ruler” came to Jesus asking this question. We get the impression from the text that the ruler was a bit slimy, coming to Jesus with feigned respect, addressing the Lord as “good teacher.” Jesus immediately corrects him, saying quickly back, “Why do you call me good? Only One is good, and that is God!” He then recites the commandments to the ruler and the latter amazingly replies, “All these things I have done from my youth.” Remarkably, Jesus accepts the answer, and then points out that there is still one thing lacking: He must give up his love of wealth, sell his goods, give to the poor and follow Him; in other words, he must become a disciple of the Lord. The ruler leaves upon hearing that, and Jesus tells His disciples the famous saying, “It is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” The disciples in their consternation speak truthfully when they ask, “Who then can be saved.” Jesus responds with the most wonderful of all phrases from Holy Scripture, a phrase that each and every one of us should memorize from our hearts, “What is impossible for man is possible with God!”

There is much to say about this passage, to be sure. But I am struck most strongly by the question the “certain ruler” in the passage first asks the Lord: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The question stands out, because I honestly wonder who asks it in this faithless and adulterous generation? The ruler may have his faults; but, at least he asked this most essential of all questions. I wonder: Who in our time even asks this question? Today, people ask, “What must I do to be more comfortable?” or “How can I make more money?” or “What new entertainment, luxury or shiny new thing can I acquire?” I can honestly count on one hand those whom I have known in my life who actually asked the question honestly, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Even within the Church, people so often approach the faith as if it were some sort series of magical actions and incantations, never realizing that what God wants from each of us is simply to submit to Him in the simple faith and trust of a child, looking to Him for all that is truly essential.

The answer of our Lord to that ruler is worthy of our most ardent attention. He, the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the answer to eternal life. He alone is the One that is good, God Incarnate. He teaches that those who seek will find; that those who knock will have the door opened to them. At least the ruler asked the essential question. He may have not liked the answer, to put the Lord first before all else; but, at least he asked. I wonder, “Do you ask?” And if so, are you willing to put aside all else for a true relationship of trust and faith in the One Who will make possible that which you cannot do on your own? Are you willing to trust Him to save you, to forgive you and to make all in your life new again? If so, you will know that only in so doing will you find the fulfillment of your most ardent longing, and in so trusting in Him, streams of living water will flow from your heart - love for Him and love for others. Only by asking will you find; and when you find, nothing else will compare; nothing else will suffice. He alone will be what your heart seeks and He alone will satisfy that inner longing that each and every human being experiences, for we were made by and for communion with God. Everything else is secondary and must be put aside.

Seek the Lord, and you will find Him. Submit in a simple faith, like that of a child. Then, and only then, will you know that peace which truly passes understanding. That is the message of Sunday’s Gospel lesson!

Fr. Elias

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