



**Orthodox Mission of the
Entrance of the Theotokos
into the Temple**

**306 W. Main Street
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<http://EntranceMission.org>

***When Death Meets Life Incarnate*
October 24, 2021**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

The disciples of John told him of all these things. And John, calling to him two of his disciples, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Luke 7:19)

The Gospel lesson for this coming Sunday immediately precedes the question of the Holy Forerunner, presented on his behalf to Jesus by his disciples "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" The question is rhetorical, for right before John even formulates his question, the answer has been given. Jesus of Nazareth, born of the Virgin Mary, is indeed the fulfillment of the hope of Israel; the One who came to give life to the world. It is amazing that people today take so little notice of this remarkable story. Perhaps they have read it, perhaps not. It lies one of many miracles embedded in the Holy Gospels, but this one is especially poignant and especially powerful.

In the story as St. Luke relates it a young man has died, and his body is being borne out of the city to the place of the dead, just as the Romans would someday crucify Jesus outside of the city in a place among the tombs. St. Luke sums up the plight of the young man's mother with

words that skillfully summarize her terrible plight: "...man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." She had lost her only son, and to make it even worse, if anything could be worse than that, St. Luke observes that she was a widow, with no one left to care for her. She would be reduced to a life of suffering, surviving on handouts or on the fruits of begging. In Israel of the first century, it was a catastrophe beyond compare.

As would have been customary in funerals of that time and place, the bier with the mourners would have been accompanied by paid women shrieking their laments. Jesus meets them head on, stops them, touches the bier (which itself would have been considered a defilement) tells the mourners to be silent and raises the young man from the dead back to life. All in an instant. Of course, those present who could even overcome their wonder to react to such an astonishing miracle would have been reminded of the great miracle of Elias who raised the son of the widow of Zarephath. But that great prophet had to lay himself down three times over the corpse, imploring with great fervor for the restoration of life; Jesus does so with a word, for He is indeed the Master in the flesh, "the One Who is to come."

St. Luke's Gospel has been called the Gospel of mercy. And indeed, this story, which only St. Luke tells in his Gospel, is a supreme miracle of mercy. Death ended a unique life, a life that had been created in the image of God with potential to become ever more like Him. Death ended a relationship, a sacred relationship of love between a son and a mother. And death took away any and all hope for that mother's future. But in the meeting of Jesus Christ everything changed. Life, relationship, hope – all were restored by Him.

This, Brothers and Sisters, is the great message of this lesson. In Jesus Christ, and in Him and through Him alone, we have hope; through His merciful and undeserved forgiveness, He restores our broken relationship with Him and bids us to do likewise with one another. And in the midst of death, which surrounds all of us, the promise of Life Eternal is given to all who will accept it. Thus, each of us may pray the words of Psalm 22(23) with confidence: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou, Lord Jesus, art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me, ... for truly, I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever!" Glory to God for the restoration of Life, the offer of Divine Forgiveness and the restoration of lost hope! Glory to God!

Fr. Elias

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