

Holy and Glorious Great-Martyr Demetrius the Myrrh-Gusher, of Thessalonica (306 A.D.) 8 Nov. 2020

Christ is in our midst! He is and ever shall be!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

(2 Timothy 2:1-10)

The Orthodox Study Bible interprets the opening verses of today's Epistle as "a clear chain of witnesses to oral tradition", to the teachings of the Lord Jesus passed down from generation to generation through His Church. They remind us that in Christ we are one and that His teachings are for all believers and are not the private property of an elite! As witnesses to the Truth of those teachings, how do we respond? An important part of today's Epistle tells us to respond in opening our hearts and souls to our eternal need for courage, for strength, for endurance and for focus in matters of faith and witness. To endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ, to compete as an athlete according to the rules and as a farmer to be first to partake of the crops are metaphors for the hard work and commitment required of all of us as followers of the Lord Jesus! Those who do nothing gain nothing! The soldier who does not focus on the battle will lose it. The athlete who does not train will not gain the prize. The farmer who neglects his land will end up without a crop! Nothing ventured! Nothing gained! We get out of life what we put into it! Paul reminds us of the human frailties which inhibit our progress along the road of faith and life. The word of God, however is not chained! It is free and it is liberating! Paul also writes that his own efforts are not for himself but for us that we "may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

(Luke 16:19-31)

If we do not realize the need for this connection with the lives and welfare of others, what will be the result? In our passage from Luke's Gospel this morning, we are given an answer in the parable of the beggar Lazarus and the rich man who lives not for service and witness to others but for himself and himself alone! Luke contrasts the life of poor Lazarus – the name means "God has helped" – who sits at the rich man's gate, "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table" and the rich man "clothed in purple and fine linen" who fared sumptuously and selfishly every day! Lazarus died

“and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom”. Lazarus goes to heaven and the rich man, when he dies, is surprised to end up in the other place – Hades! In torment the rich man pleads for mercy and begs Abraham to send Lazarus to him “that he may dip the tip of his finger in water” and cool his tongue. The positions of Lazarus and the rich man are now reversed and the rich man learns to his horror that there is a vast and unbridgeable gulf between him in Hades and Lazarus to whom peace and joy have been given. The rich man has five brothers and pleads that Lazarus may go and “testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment” to which the soul of the rich man has been condemned. Abraham answers that the five brothers, like the rich man, have Moses and the prophets, and that “if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead”! If we do not open our eyes to see or our ears to hear, we may pay a steep price for our carelessness, our negligence, our indifference!

In the Epistle passage this morning we are told that “no one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier”. Sadly, in this morning’s passage from Luke’s Gospel, we read of a rich man who did entangle himself in the affairs of this life, who turned away from the Great Commandments: Love God! Love your neighbor! We learn nothing of the rich man in terms of faith and witness but only of his love of personal possessions - of fine clothing and fine food. To the plight of poor Lazarus, alone, sick and dying, the rich man seems completely indifferent, oblivious, uncaring. The rich man and his five brothers could have studied the accounts and instructions of Moses and the prophets concerning the way to live lives of good faith and good witness. They did not. For their indifference they are doomed to pay a heavy price! Like an athlete who does not bother to train, they destine themselves to lose the crown of victory! They make the wrong choices in life and as a result put their own lives in mortal peril!

In Luke’s Gospel, when Abraham warns the rich man that if his brothers do not hear the teachings of Moses and the prophets, they will not be changed if Lazarus rises from the dead to warn them to change their lives. This is also the warning implicit in the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, to embrace the strength and grace and love so freely offered to us by the Lord Jesus or to turn away from it as the rich man and his five brothers turned away from the teachings of Moses and the prophets

**Homily Holy and Glorious Great-Martyr Demetrius the Myrrh-Gusher, of Thessalonica – by Reader C
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Paul tells us in this morning's Epistle to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" and to hear His glorious message, the message which is to be communicated and taught to all of us that we may also be witnesses to His truth, His glory, His love! Paul asks us to commit these truths to the faithful that they may in turn teach others also! This is our choice – to be strong in grace and love; to be faithful servants and witnesses all the days of our lives! Glory to God!!

CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST! HE IS AND EVER SHALL BE!

AMEN!