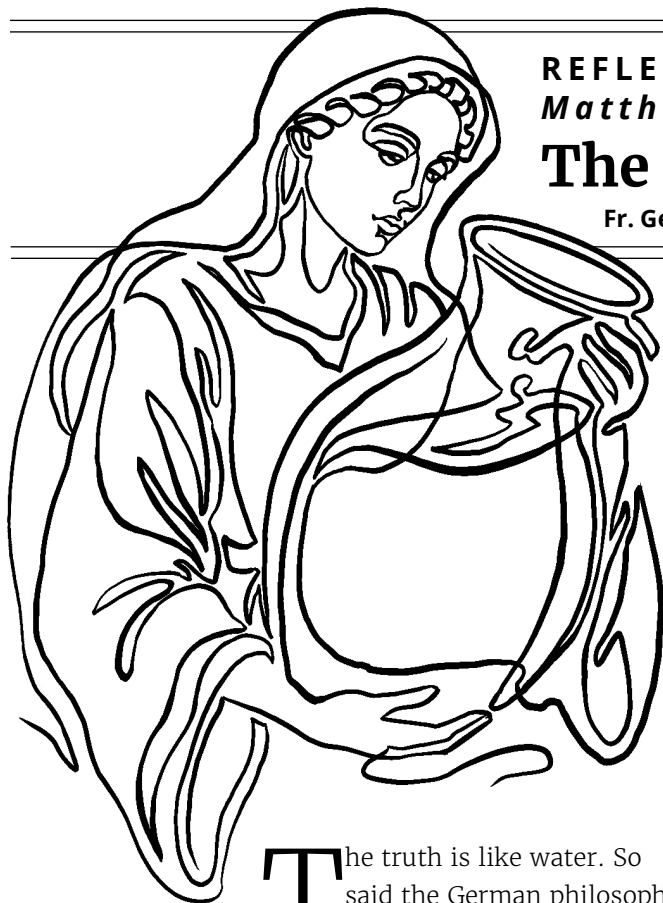




DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America



REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING

Matthew 25:31-46

The Truth is Like Water

Fr. George Parsenios

The truth is like water. So said the German philosopher Schopenhauer. The truth is like water because it needs a vessel to hold it. For water to collect and accumulate and not just disperse and dissipate, it must be gathered and contained. The truth is the same. We have to carry it within our bodies. If our deepest truths are just words and thoughts, but not actions and behaviors that we actually live, then the truth will slip away carelessly like water through our fingers. It will have no effect on the world around us. We have arrived at Meatfare Sunday, where we begin the first stage of Lenten fasting by bidding farewell to meat. By engaging in the Lenten disciplines of the Church, we have taken the first step—but only the first step—in showing that our faith is not merely words

we say, but actions that we do. As we pray more during the longer services of Lent and as we abstain from earthly luxuries, we show that we are citizens of heaven, and not just citizens of the earthly cities we inhabit (Philippians 3:20-21). But this is only the first step in becoming vessels of the Christian truth. Today's Gospel reading pushes us to take the next and greater step. Notice in this Gospel passage that those who are invited into the kingdom by the Son of Man are not the people who fasted and went to Church, but the people who served the hungry and the poor. This does not mean, of course, that fasting and the other disciplines of Lent are irrelevant. Indeed, they are essential, for they train us to be detached from luxury and comfort. Once we detach ourselves from wealth and indulgence, however, we have further work to do. We must share our wealth with others who have nothing. We worship a crucified God who sacrificed himself for us. If we wish to worship him correctly and truly, then we must sacrifice for others—and not just those near and dear to us. Even unbelievers do good things for their friends and family. But our God sacrificed himself for us even though we offered him nothing in return. We must find opportunities to do the same, to share our extra goods and money with those who cannot return the favor and those whose names we do not know. When we do this, we imitate the One True God, and we become living vessels of his truth.

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*Diakonia is made possible by a generous grant from **Leadership 100***

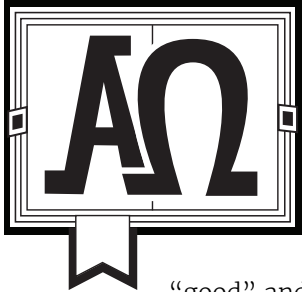
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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: Evangelion (Εὐαγγέλιον) What is “Gospel?”

Fr. George Parsenios



The term “gospel” holds a central place in Christian vocabulary. It translates the Greek word *evangelion*, which means “good news.” The modern English word “Gospel” is derived from Old English *gōdspel*, composed of the roots *gōd* meaning “good” and *spell* meaning “story.” So, the English word “Gospel” is a word—for—word translation of *evangelion*—“good news.” The Greek term is not exclusively Christian. The word was used throughout the ancient world to denote the good news of a king’s victory. In the Old Testament, when God defeats his enemies, the prophets “proclaim the good news” (*evangelizomenos*) of his triumph (Isaiah 40:9–10). When the Roman Emperor Augustus

conquered his foes, stone inscriptions broadcast the “good news” (*evangelion*) of his imperial might. St. Paul is the first writer to use this term for the Christian message, as he announces the “good news” that Jesus rose from the dead (1 Cor 15). Like a mighty King, Jesus stands victorious over his enemies: sin and death. The New Testament Gospels are called “Gospels” precisely because they describe this victory. Each Gospel ends with Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Notice, however, that in Church we do not call these books the Gospel *of* Matthew, *of* Mark, *of* Luke or *of* John, as though each is a different Gospel. We refer, rather, to the Gospel *according to* Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. There is only one *evangelion*. While we hear this message *according to* four different witnesses, there is only one Gospel message, that Christ is a mighty King, and he has “trampled down death by death.”

THIS WEEK’S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

The Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Korean War

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 placed the small Orthodox Christian presence on the Korean Peninsula in grave danger. At the time, the Orthodox Church in Korea was served by only one priest, who was captured and taken to North Korea during the early stages of the conflict. With its sole clergyman imprisoned and the country engulfed in war, the survival of the Church was uncertain.

According to Park Yo-han, deacon of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, the arrival of Greek forces marked a turning point. “When the Greek forces came, the Orthodox priests accompanied them,” he recalled in an interview with the *Korea JoongAng Daily*. Learning of the Church’s hardships, Greek clergy and soldiers helped sustain liturgical life, ensured the continuation of services, and shared their rations and resources with the local faithful. Through this sacrificial ministry, the Orthodox Church in Korea endured the war years.



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THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

Preparing for Great Lent through Love and Responsibility

The Sunday of the Last Judgment, also known as Meatfare Sunday, is the third Sunday of the Triodion, the 3-week period leading our journey toward Great Lent. Each Sunday adds another dimension to our spiritual preparation. This Sunday introduces the theme of accountability before God.



The Biblical Story

The Gospel reading from Matthew 25:31–46 presents the parable told by Jesus of His Second Coming. When the Son of Man returns in His glory, He will gather all people before Him and separate them “as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.” The “sheep” are welcomed into the kingdom because they showed compassion to others—feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned. He tells them, “As you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” He then turns to those who failed to love in this way with the dreaded words, “Depart from Me.”

The Icon of the Sunday

The icon of the Sunday of the Last Judgment incorporates all the elements of the parable. Jesus sits on the throne and before him the Last

Judgment takes place. He extends his hands in blessing upon the Theotokos on his right, and John the Baptist on his left.

This Sunday we are reminded that Salvation is not a passive gift; it is a relationship lived out in love. Just as the Father’s mercy invites every sinner home, so His righteousness calls us to examine how we treat those around us. Lent is not only a season of fasting, but a season of compassion, humility, and personal accountability.

The message of this Sunday’s Gospel reading teaches that the criterion of the Last Judgment is personal love lived out in daily encounters. Every person placed in our path becomes an opportunity to meet Jesus. Every act of mercy becomes an offering to Him; every refusal to love becomes a judgment upon ourselves. Our hearts are revealed in how we respond to the needs before us.

Your Personal Challenge for the Week: “See Christ. Serve Christ.”

Turn the parable’s commands into a deliberate act of love.

“Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to Me.” (Mt 25:40)

Choose One Concrete Work of Mercy: Pick one action you will complete within 72 hours

- **Feed / Give drink:** Bring a meal, groceries, coffee, or a grocery card.
- **Welcome the stranger:** Invite someone to sit with you at coffee hour; make a phone call or visit.
- **Clothe the naked:** Donate clean, needed clothing or winter gear locally



Just For Kids!

(...and the young at heart)

Building Up the Body of Christ

In the Old Testament we read about Nehemiah (2:19). When he saw the crumbling walls of Jerusalem, he told the people to "Rise up and build." The people said, "Let us rise and build." Like Nehemiah, we can help take care of our church. We can also build up our own faith, through prayer, sacraments, participating in the Divine Liturgy and more.



COLOR ME!