

The Sunday after Theophany Matthew 4:12-17

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (KJV)

The Holy Scriptures provide specific names and locations for believers through the centuries to know the truth. Today's Gospel reading is an example of specific names and locations being used as a basis for learning and growth.

God's Holy Church proclaims verifiable truth as the Lord Jesus Christ is truth. (Jn.14:6) Embracing truth is the primary basis for life and for the way of life. Truth leads believers on the narrow path to the Heavenly Kingdom and Eternal life.

The current Gospel reveals the work of God through the centuries. Truth endures. The Holy Prophet Isaiah mentioned Zabulon and Nephthalim centuries before the time of St. John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Is.9:1-2)

Holy Prophet Isaiah's words were fulfilled as mentioned by the Evangelist Matthew in the present Gospel. At Baptism and at each Divine Liturgy, believers profess in the Creed the belief in the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophets.

Today's Gospel verifies the work of God is fulfilled and verified with the passage of centuries. The present Gospel is a lesson of patience in seeking to learn from and about God.

St. Peter's Epistle gives perspective to God's actions through the centuries. The Epistle states: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8)

The enduring wisdom of the Holy Prophet Isaiah is expressed in this way: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." (Is.55:8)

Learning about the Lord is a life-long experience. God is greater than we will ever be able to realize. The present Gospel reading has endured through the centuries and is rooted deep in preceding centuries.

Believers need to be humble in thought, always be patient and open to learning about God. God is ever accessible for learning and for nourishing the soul. Seekers of knowledge about the Lord God need not remain in the dark.

The present Gospel states the people in darkness saw great light. The Lord Jesus Christ is the light of the world and enables believers to move out of darkness. St. John's Gospel preserves Jesus words about being the light of the world.

Jesus said: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (Jn.8:12) God’s Holy Church guides believers from darkness to light in Christ.

Each year on Pascha in the Gospel reading we hear about St. John the Baptist bearing witness to the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (Jn.1:6-9)

Learning about God takes work and effort. Conscious choices are involved in remaining true to the baptismal commitment throughout life. Sin gets in the way of the believer’s faithfulness and must be firmly rejected.

The Lord Jesus Christ made clear in the present Gospel the necessity of repentance. Each believer determines whether to repent. Each person decides on the value he or she places on the care of the soul.

Career choices, personal interests, goals and relationships reflect if the soul has primary value for the believer. St. Mark’s Gospel states: “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mk.8:36)

Willingness to be focused on Jesus Christ throughout life requires great determination. When the believer commits to Jesus Christ being first in life, all else falls into proper place.

The Church celebrates Jesus Christ’s Resurrection on Pascha. Pascha is the Feast of Feasts. Each Divine Liturgy is an experience of the Resurrection, a unification with Christ and a movement toward God’s Kingdom and eternal life.

The present Gospel unites believers with Christ and is a basis for deep and serious thought. Individuals invest in the Kingdom of God when taking the Gospel seriously.

The Gospel lessons are to be incorporated into daily life and applied with great care. The Church has endured and overcome persecutions in preserving, protecting and proclaiming the Gospel.

Each believer invests according to the effort applied to making the Gospel a part of daily life. God’s blessings are immeasurable and unlimited. God’s love is manifested in the Gospel.

Everyday is an opportunity to learn from the Gospel and demonstrate gratitude to the Lord God. Believers move from darkness to light when heeding the Gospel and following the Light of Christ.

The Sunday after Theophany. St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa; Venerable Dometian, Bishop of Mitylene. January 10/23, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic