

The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 19:16-26

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (KJV)

The present Gospel focuses on growth and change for the life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Growth in Christ involves following and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart, mind and soul are required to be open to change.

Acting on the interest in growth in Christ is necessary. The rich man in the present Gospel was only willing to adhere to the commandment to a certain degree. He had reached the limit of what he was willing to do.

How many believers feel they do enough for the church, for their family, their friends or their employers? Growth requires a willingness to change and put aside all that inhibits growth.

Jesus told the rich man to dispose of his possessions to enter into life. The rich man expressed an interest in eternal life but his attachment to his possessions held him back from the change required.

Believers exist in every century who deny themselves the fulness of the life in Christ. The unwillingness to change and give up inhibiting possessions in the current life prevents living fully in Christ.

Possessions can include material possessions but also other non-material aspects such as unwillingness to give up an office or position held to move forward. Certain attitudes can prevent growth in Christ and need to be set aside.

Eternal life is the intended goal of each Christian. Growth in Jesus Christ is to occur throughout life. The believer must be conscious and active in following Christ in order to grow.

The Holy Gospel, the Church's Divine services and teachings nourish and guide the believer from Holy Baptism until departure from this life. Attentive believers are active in following Christ in the Church.

Participating in the Holy Mysteries enable the believer to be transformed and remain united with Christ. Embracing change includes opening the heart, mind and soul to Christ and welcoming the newness Jesus Christ constantly provides.

The love, mercy and goodness of Christ await the believer opening the heart, mind and soul to newness in Christ. Eternal life is the ultimate goal. The path to eternal life is set forth at the time of Holy Baptism.

God reveals the steps to take from Baptism until departure from this life. God's revelations become known to the believer through participating in the life of the Church.

Constant repentance, fasting and prayer open the believer's heart, mind and soul to attentiveness to God's teachings and revelations. The attentive believer comes to know the steps God desires for the believer to take.

Just as Jesus told the rich man in the current Gospel, attentive believers will understand each day Jesus' expectations for eternal life. The decision rests with the believer whether to give up the inhibitors in life to gain eternal life.

The rich man went away sorrowful. The rich man's possessions ruled his heart, mind and soul to a greater degree than his desire for eternal life. This Gospel is a challenge for believers each year to examine the heart, mind and soul.

Hearing the present Gospel enables each believer is to look carefully at the heart, mind and soul. Each believer hearing the Gospel answers the question whether to give up possessions inhibiting growth to gain eternal life.

Jesus Christ makes clear eternal life is possible. God makes eternal life possible. With God, difficulties can be overcome that stand in the road of attaining eternal life.

By reaching into the depths of the heart, mind and soul, the believer truly desiring eternal life, will find a way to seek God's help to make the changes necessary.

Childbirth is a painful experience for the mother but giving birth brings joy. Giving up old ways of life can be painful for believers. The joy offered in Jesus Christ makes the change worth making.

The soul is worth more than the whole world. The Gospel of St. Mark states "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mk. 8:36) Today is the day to embrace Jesus Christ and seek eternal life.

The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Martyr Agathonius; Holy Hieromartyr Gorazd of Prague. August 22/September 4, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

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