

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost Matthew 25:14-30

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (KJV)

The Sunday before the Exaltation of the Precious Cross John 3:13-17

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (KJV)

God's Holy Church focuses on the Elevation of The Precious and Life-Giving Cross this week. Serious believers are mindful throughout life of Christ's love exemplified by His voluntarily ascending The Cross.

The Cross is the Sign of Victory. The Cross revealed the Lord Jesus Christ as the Conqueror of Death. By His death on The Cross, Jesus Christ conquered death and established hope for eternal life.

Focusing on the message and the power of The Cross guides believers through life from the Baptismal font to departure from this life and beyond. Eternal life awaits believers living the life pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner

keeps the believer mindful of Christ's love on The Cross. The Jesus Prayer offers the hope of forgiveness made possible by Christ on the Cross.

The Jesus Prayer keeps believers united with Christ throughout earthly life and facilitates the repentance necessary for a God-pleasing life. The Jesus Prayer reminds the believer of his or her own sinfulness and the need to repent.

The constant appeal for mercy to Jesus Christ as the Son of God transforms and empowers the believer. Repeating the pleas to Jesus for mercy redirects the believer away from sin.

Unity with and empowerment by the Crucified and Resurrected Jesus Christ enables believers to put sin behind. Jesus Christ within the believer becomes dominant as the believer repents through the love and power of The Cross.

The Holy Mysteries of the Church bring renewal to repentant believers. The Holy Mysteries of Confession, Communion and Holy Unction enable believers to focus on the talents given by God and to apply them in God-pleasing ways.

God's Holy Church provides the Gospel lessons for today about The Precious and Life-Giving Cross and the Parable of the Talents to nourish believers and guide them to repentance and a God-pleasing life.

Only by allowing Jesus Christ to fully live within the heart, mind and soul will the believer reach the heights of the full stature mentioned in the Scriptures. Always be mindful for the goal the Apostle Paul established for the Ephesians.

Holy Apostle Paul expressed the goal relevant for all with these words: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the **stature** of the fulness of Christ." (Eph.4:13)

The Christian life intends constant repentance and responsibly addressing the Crosses of daily life. The Lord Jesus Christ established the example for all believers when He died on The Cross in order to rise from the Tomb.

Believers are to repent, die to the sin and be renewed in Christ by His love and mercy. Conscious and conscientious believers are always aware of personal sin and the need for constant repentance.

Christ's love demonstrated on The Cross empowers and renews believers. Praying The Jesus Prayer, constantly repenting with Christ's help and with unity in Christ brings newness and renewal in life.

The Divine Liturgy is the opportunity and the experience of unity with newness in Christ. Today is the day to repent. Now is the time to say by the power and love of The Cross: "Lord Jesus Christ Son of God have mercy on me a sinner."

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost. The Sunday before the Elevation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross. Holy Mother Theodora of Alexandria. Venerable Sergius and Herman of Valaam. September 11/24, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic