

THE GOSPELS: "WRITTEN" ICONS



Much of what we know about the earthly life of our Lord, Jesus Christ comes to us from the writings of the 4 Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Just as iconographers express the same theology in different styles in their works, these talented writers of the Gospels approached the story of our Savior's life from their own, unique perspective.

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost

November 16, 2008

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Father John Cmur; Deacon Kenneth E. Ellis and
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,
Cantors

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ This Friday we have the solemn feast of the Entry of the Birthgiver of God in the Temple. In anticipation of the holyday, the vesperal Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Thursday evening at 7:30 PM Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ The annual St. Nicholas Day Covered Dish will be on Sunday, December 7. A food listing will be available in the hall kitchen for all to sign up and prepare favorite dishes for its success.

+++ The offering for flowers for the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord will take place on Sunday, December 7. Please use appropriate envelope and be generous with your sacrificial offering so our church will be fittingly beautified for this solemn feast.

+++ His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood at St. John the Baptist Parish in Perth Amboy on Sunday, January 11, 2009 when he will celebrate a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Many bishops and priests will be present for the festivities. We are invited to participate as well since Father is his classmate. A Golden Jubilee Banquet will be held at the Forge Inn in Woodbridge as part of the event. We would like to have 2 tables from our parish. Tickets for the banquet are priced at \$50.00 for adults and \$15.00 for children under thirteen. Please see Nina Harrison to make reservations and secure details as soon as possible. Deadline is December 24. We wish our parish is well-represented.

+++ The weekly Scripture Study meets on Sundays following the Divine Liturgy while children attend their own classes. Everyone now has an opportunity to participate in adult religious education at which Scripture is discussed and explained along with other interests.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received this past week-end: Tithe Offering, \$██████, Candles, \$██████, Food Coupons, \$██████, Refund, \$██████, Kitchen, \$██████; Parish Dues, \$██████, Diocesan Dues, \$██████, for a total of \$██████. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 38 adults and 14 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Pani Lucas, Father Lucas, Paul Szmaida, Mary Jaakobs, Robert Gorbich, Kent Pasquino and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$██████0 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ A thousand thanks to all the good souls who in all ways contributed to the success of our Thanksgiving Bake Sale. We bestow on all vital helping hands the generous blessing of our Lord for continued good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$9██████00. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ Please check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the worship of our God.

+++ Please be certain to see **Helen Karpiak** or a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized **\$11,000** on this project to date!

+++ **As soon as possible, please see Marilyn Korba to sign up for the Alaskan Cruise next August, 2009 as well as for starting the new Ten Week Club. We are in need of your support.**

+++ The Winter Bake Sale will take place for Nativity of our Lord on and Friday and Saturday, December 12 and 13. Cookies will be available at the Nativity Bake Sale. Please begin to secure orders NOW. The next Pirohi Sale is on December 6.

+++ This past week Father received for our Parish Library the donation of a DVD about the Moslem threat to our nation and the world from Fox News as a public service. Anyone interesting viewing it may see Father as soon as possible and it will be provided. It is an interesting, informative and provocative work and Father recommends it for viewing and study.

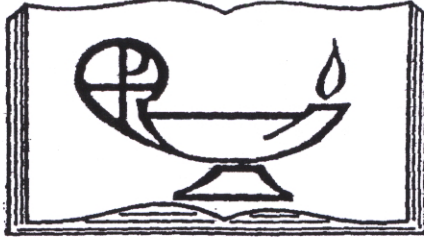
+++ Our parish lawyer has pursued the feasibility of our obtaining the 4.67 acres of land in Millstone Township on route 537 and Mineral Springs Road. He had consultations with the Planning Board Chairman to secure in writing the use of the property for our church and parish center. We have determined as long as all other requirements for the property are observed, securing a variance will not be a problem. Father engaged an engineer to make a preliminary study of the total square footage of the property and draw out the set backs and determine the maximum square footage of buildings we would be allowed to put on it. This is important since we must add a kitchen and bathrooms to the original hall plans. The church building will remain the same. Driveway and parking lot square footage must also be included. By November 20 this study will be completed and given to Father when it will be shared with our faithful.

+++ The Nativity Fast began yesterday. During this holy preparatory season for the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord, Father will be preaching a series of homilies on *Men in Scripture* at the services celebrated Monday evenings at 7: 30 PM. Plan on being present with us in prayer and an eagerness to grow spiritually as we observe the prescriptions of the holy preparatory season. All are asked to abstain from meat products.

+++ We are in need of your support, so be certain to taken a catalogue and order sheet for candy for the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord from the vestibule desk. Please return the order sheets as soon as possible. **Deadline for turning in orders is Sunday, November 30.**

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!

LORD



**TEACH
US**

Who Is Jesus?

And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased'
Matthew 3:17.

Here begins the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God... Mark 1: 1.

...the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head Matthew 8: 20.

They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace Isaiah 9: 6.

It happened that a Canaanite woman living in that locality presented herself, crying out to him, 'Lord, Son of David, have pity on me Matthew 15: 22!

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world John 1: 29.

They said to him, 'Rabbi, which means teacher, where do you stay' John 1: 38?

The Lord God says, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the one Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty' Revelation 1: 8.

A name was written on the part of the cloak that covered his thigh: 'King of kings and Lord of Lords' Revelation 19: 16!

A family record of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham...It was of her that Jesus who is called the Messiah was born Matthew 1: 1, 2, 16.

ALL FOR LOVE

+++ How pure is the heart that seeks the love of Christ. +++ Intention, pure intention is the all important factor in our love of God. +++ Our work should not be merely a worldly activity because our prayer life should be associated with it. +++ When we do something, particularly when it is unpleasant, it can be accomplished by telling Jesus, out of love I do this for You. +++ Doing everything out of love of Christ is difficult because then you have to renounce every self-satisfaction, every selfish advantage. +++ Doing things out of love of Christ will produce in you the spirit of Christ more clearly. +++ The darker the night of suffering, the more radiant the life of pure love that emerges from it. +++ Every grace bestowed upon the soul by God, every trial He sends, every sacrifice He requires of us has only one purpose: to cleanse the soul more and more and to establish it in the state of pure love. +++ That life is abundant in love which desires nothing for itself but is ready to give everything to God. +++ Love is not self-seeking. +++ The more you give up of yourself, the truer your love is. +++ The man who is under the influence of God's love for him in no longer belongs to himself. +++ True love for God and improper self-love cannot dwell in you in peaceful harmony. +++ In order that you may love God only and stop adoring yourself as a sort of secondary idol, He sends humiliation into your life. +++ The weeds of self-love are rooted so deeply in your being you cannot eradicate them by our own efforts; you need God's loving help. +++ If you wish to remain an egotist forever, spurn the loving humiliations our God sends into your life. +++ If a man accepts with a joyful consent the fact of his own nothingness, the Holy Trinity is glorified in Him. +++ The more determined a soul is to deny itself every natural satisfaction, the stronger and more selfless is its love. +++ The heart that loves Jesus also loves the Cross. +++ If you know how to change your Cross into a sacrifice of love for God, the heavens will rejoice over the glory you thus render to Him. +++ In the raging storm of trials sing always the song of love. +++ Your most important duty will always be to fashion your life after the love of God. +++ If the love in Jesus' heart is all sacrifice, how can your love be without suffering? +++ If out of love for man, Jesus embraced the Cross, how can we hope to avoid it? +++ You will remain forever poor and wanting if you have not learned how to love. +++

Twenty Second Sunday

The rich man in today's prescribed gospel narrative doesn't seem, on the surface, at least, to have many problems. He appears to have been a successful man in this earthly life. He must have done many good things to have achieved such success temporally, but apparently there were many problems he encountered which were never addressed nor resolved. He thus lost his soul because he was preoccupied only with the here and now. He addressed the needs of his flesh and imaginary mind but forgot about the even more important soul within him.

This reminds us of the well-known story of Jehoshaphat describing one of the greatest epic battles in the history of Israel. Jehoshaphat, the king of Israel, received word from friends that the combined armies of three nations were on their way to fight and conquer him. The chronicler tells us that the three nations were the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Meuinites (2 Chronicles 20: 1). And all were nearby, just beyond the Jordan River or the Dead Sea. The odds were definitely not in Jehoshaphat's favor.

This story is as relevant to us as is the rich man's perplexing problems because we all face battles each day: financial, spiritual, marital, vocational, relational; all kinds in our daily lives. Our Creator put the story of Jehoshaphat in his revelation to us in order to illustrate certain vital spiritual principles in winning the battles of life.

The second book of Chronicles (20: 1) shows us the first principle in overcoming the battles of life: *identify the enemy*. This seems rather obvious, but actually is not. The rich man today misses the point as so many of us in our pilgrimage journey. Most people simply do not know who their enemy is. We often think the enemy is a person who is trying to take something from us – our job, our spouse, our earthly treasure – but very often the enemy is our very own attitude. It is not so much the situation that gets us down, but our reaction to the predicament we find ourselves facing. Before we can start winning our personal battles, we have to accurately and honestly identify the enemy.

We notice immediately how Jehoshaphat reacted when he heard these three nations were coming against him; he was rightly alarmed. This is typical reaction for everyone. When we see a big problem, we panic and become unsure of what is going to happen. "What is going to happen to me? I'm starting to get afraid." This is a natural reaction to problems, and fear is not bad unless we deal with it in the wrong way. We can use fear to motivate ourselves to conquer the problems we face.

But if we become discouraged and give up, or get angry with our heavenly Father and ask, "Why me?" then fear begins to defeat us.

Jehoshaphat was afraid because he was facing what seemed to be a hopeless situation. He cried out to the Lord, "We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do" 2 Chronicles 20: 12. This illustrates the second principle in winning life's battles: *Admit your inadequacy*. There is only one kind of person God doesn't help: someone who doesn't think he needs help. When you admit your inadequacy and ask for help, God can work on it. The rich man thought he overcame his economic problems by feasting splendidly each day and throwing sumptuous parties so he would never be alone in life's journey. Because he had the wherewithal to cover these great expenses, he never thought of the needs of others.

After Jehoshaphat admitted that he and his counselors did not know what to do, he prayed, "But our eyes are upon you" 2 Chronicles 20: 12. We need to get our eyes focused on the Lord. Too often we have our eye on everything else except the one who can solve our difficulties. Circumstances are like a mattress. If we're on top, we rest easily, but if we are underneath, we might suffocate. If we keep our eyes on the Lord, we will win out over our adverse circumstances. We cannot live the Christian life on our own, because we have a power shortage. We need the power that comes from above. We live the Christian life "not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit" Zechariah 4: 6. We need to allow God's spirit to live through us if we desire success.

So in the middle of the crisis, what did Jehoshaphat do? He proclaimed a fast and called all the people to come together to seek the Lord's blessing and strength (2 Chronicles 20: 3, 4.) People came from every town in Judea to ask God's help. The third principle in winning the battles of life is to *take our problems to the Lord*. This means praying earnestly. Unfortunately, prayer is often the last desperate thing we try because we want to be able to work things out on our own. That is what the rich man did. He thought he had all the answers and perhaps he did, but they were all the wrong answers to his problems of a neglected spiritual life.

A man approached his priest once and said, "Father we really have problems on our hands. Nothing's happening and we can't solve the problem." The priest said, "Well, I guess all we can do is pray about it." The man responded, "Father, has it come to that?" Prayer has to be the very first weapon we use, not the last, whenever we face the battles of life. It is important to remember that Jesus fought the biggest battles in

life and He also prayed the most. Jehoshaphat prayed, in effect: "Dear Lord, I know you have helped me in the past. I know you can help me in the future. So, please help me now!"

Notice how God responds to Jehoshaphat's prayer: "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" 2 Chronicles 20: 15. The fourth principle in overcoming life's battles is *to relax in faith commitment*. Many Christians today are totally worn out because they are trying to fight God's battles in their own limited strength. In trying to fight God's battles in our power, we have very limited resources, so we are sure to be defeated. We often do not realize what our Christian baptismal faith commitment entails. In our enthusiasm we may think we are ready to go out and bring in God's kingdom single-handedly. We are eager to win the world for him. Then we work hard and reality sets in and eventually we come crawling back on our hands and knees, feeling remorseful and disappointed that we have let God down.

But our God tells us, "No you did not let me down, because you weren't holding me up." We don't hold up God, He holds us up. We don't have God in our hands, He has us in his hands. God is trying to tell us, "Relax in your faith commitment and let me work through you." When you say to God, after finding out you cannot succeed by yourself, Heavenly Father, I give up!" you will hear his voice saying, "Great! Now I can start working because as long as you are out there trying to make your own plans and do it on your own, you are just going to mess up. Relax, let me work through you!"

St. Paul teaches us, "As you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him" Colossians 2: 6. In other words, as you look at the way you became a believer, be sure to live the Christian life the very same way. It is a choice. Scripture teaches us that salvation is "not by works or deeds, so that no one can boast" Ephesians 2: 9. You are not an Orthodox Christian by working really hard at being good, by promising to be perfect, by doing your very best. You live the Christian life simply by relaxing and cooperating with the grace God initially bestows on you. We simply let Christ live in us. So we continue as believers in the same way and let God be God who manages whatever comes our way. Victory in life is a gift from God. "Thanks be to God because He gives us victory" 1 Corinthians 15: 57.

Twice our heavenly Father instructs Jehoshaphat not to be afraid (2 Chronicles 20: 15, 17). Although the king thought he had every reason to be afraid, after all, it was a three-to-one odds against him. But God still said, "Do not be afraid." Jehoshaphat

finally learned we and our God are a majority! Why? Because God promised to fight the battle for us and with us and in us.

If we think about it seriously, we come to realize our God has never lost a battle. Not one. Not ever! So you know who is going to win in the end. It is like reading the last chapter of novel so you can know how it is all going to end right and then going back and relaxing through the story. Our problems shrink in size when we turn them over to God's loving mercy and care. God tells Jehoshaphat, "You will not have to fight the battle. Take up your positions, stand firm" 2 Chronicles 20: 17. Standing firm means being faithful, trusting the Lord, doing all we can to cooperate with God's strengthening grace. It is a quiet spiritual attitude of soul and body, including our mind that says, "I am going to trust God."

This is the lesson we are called upon to learn from today's gospel narrative. Remain faithful like the poor and abused Lazarus. He did win in the end and the end was eternity! We are called upon to have faith in the Lord our God and we will be upheld; to have faith in his prophets and their message of hope, and we will be successful. Our God is faithful and we can depend on him; He will never let us down. Secondly, we need to stand firm on the teachings of the Church, the truth of his revelation to us in Scripture.

We should thank God in advance that He conquers life's problems so that we can look forward to victory in whatever assails us. The story of Jehoshaphat is fascinating because after he consulted the people, he appointed men to sing to the Lord, to praise God for his splendor and holiness as they went out at the head of the army (2 Chronicles 20: 21). God's plan works. Then the enemy armies got confused and ended up killing each other. All God's people had to do was divide up and plunder what was left on the battle field. It now belonged to them! Why did God do it this way? As a visual object lesson to teach us to praise him in faith even before the victory takes place for us to see.

This is a story of thanking God in advance. There is power in thankfulness. Each of us can say, "Lord I know I have problems, but I thank you in advance because there is no situation you cannot take care of." No doubt Lazarus was grateful the dogs licked his sores and alleviated his suffering. He saw God's loving mercy not in the heart of the rich man at whose gate he begged for some concern, but in the instincts of animals God created. What an indictment on human beings! What a blessed soul this poor beggar in rags possessed!

Revealing our feelings is the beginning of healing.
Articulating what's on our heart, confessing our
mistakes, is the first step in seeing that God
can forgive those mistakes and all others.

*God, examine me and know my heart;
test me and know my nervous thoughts.*

PSALM 139:23

BE THEREFORE
WISE AS SERPENTS,
AND
HARMLESS AS DOVES.

Matthew 10:16

Did You Know That ...

...what makes a Christian a Christian is not perfection, but forgiveness?

...God's love is no dependent on how you look, how you think how you act or how perfect you are?

...to be fully united in prayer with the Father, we must get rid of relationship problems?

...even if everything is taken away from us, we still have the glorious promise of salvation with Christ?

...repentance is the decision to turn from selfish desires and seek God?

...our is faithful God?

...wee cannot approach God for mercy if we are unmerciful?

...because He gave us his spirit, God lives in us and we in him?

...you do not need to justify the mistakes of others, simply forgive them?

...you can interrupt the vicious cycle of paying someone back for what was done to you?

...although God's power is not touchable, it is real and obtainable?

...because we are friends of Jesus, our lives are richer?

...repentance is a sincere genuine regret that creates sorrow and moves us to admit wrong and desire to do better?

...the words of the Carpenter promising rest are compelling because we so desire to rest after the body is worked out?

...regardless of our sin, if we repent and confess it, we are not guilty?

...our deep desire to be in heaven is to find peace and settle down in a valley fertile with contentment?

...Christ ended the law so that everyone who believes in him might be right with God?



MATTHEW was one of the 12 Apostles. Matthew's Gospel, written in Aramaic, has a definite Jewish "flavor" to it. He uses numerous Old Testament quotations in his work, describing also in great detail the religious observances of the Jews. Matthew strongly emphasizes the theme of Christ being the Incarnate God - the Messiah for whom the world had awaited.

MARK was thought to have been a young man at the time of our Lord's public ministry. According to tradition, Mark was greatly influenced by the Apostle Peter, using his teachings as the basis of his Gospel. Although the shortest and most concise, the theme of Christ coming to serve and to sacrifice is placed before us.

LUKE takes the most historical approach with his Gospel, dating biblical events by reference to secular history. Because he was writing primarily for Christians with a Gentile background like his, the challenge of mission and evangelization is brought to light with his words.

JOHN, the "beloved disciple" of our Lord, left us with a deeply theological Gospel. He clearly defines the purpose of his writing: ". . . these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His Name." (John 20:31)

Yes, the Gospels are, indeed, "icons of Christ in words." These men truly acted as the "brushes of the Holy Spirit" relating to us different events. They left us with one, unified message: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Follow Him, and salvation will be yours.