



SAINT

T  
A  
R  
A  
S  
I  
U  
S



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

March 3, 2013

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; 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.

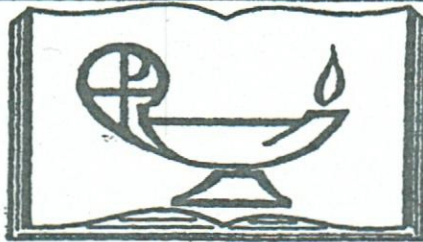
*It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen 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 Saturday is the first All Souls' Day. The Divine Liturgy, followed by a Memorial Service will be celebrated at 9:00 AM. Please come and join us in prayer for the souls of our beloved departed.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Ann Helene, Nina Marya, Debra and Michael.

LORD



TEACH  
US

### God's Purpose

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven*  
Matthew 5: 3 – 12.

*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever* 1  
John 2: 17.

*Is it not to give your bread to those in need, and not let the poor who have no resting place come into your house, to put a robe on the unclothed one when you see him, and not to keep your eyes shut for fear of seeing his flesh? Then will light be shining on you like the morning, and your wounds will quickly be well; and your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will come after you. Then at the sound of your voice, the Lord will give you an answer; at your cry he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away from among you the yoke, the putting out of the finger of shame, and the evil word; and if you give your bread to those in need of it, so that the troubled one may have his desire, then you will have light in the dark, and you night will be as the full light of the sun. And the Lord will be your guide at all times; in dry places he will give you water in full measure, and will make strong your bones and you will be like a watered garden and like an ever-flowing spring* Isaiah 58: 7 – 11.

## A Gentle God

*...by the Spirit's power we cry to God, "Father, my Father!"*  
Romans 8: 15.

What kind of image do you have of our heavenly Father when you pray?

We cannot forget our God is more attentive than the  
most loving parents because

He is entirely selfless and devotes all his attention to you.

God is better than the most understanding friend because  
He does not judge and He does not have his own problems  
to worry about or color his opinion.

He desires only our salvation and our good.

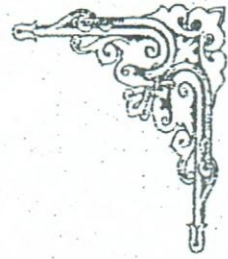
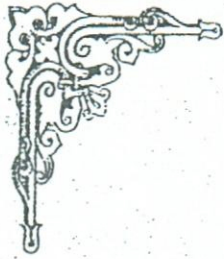
God is more gentle than the most devoted grandparent with  
far greater  
insight  
and wisdom  
and patience.

We often struggle in our relationships  
looking for the perfect person  
to talk to and share our lives;  
yet He is with us all the time and  
never leaves our side.

We only need to turn to him and acknowledge his presence.  
He can and will be all we ever need!

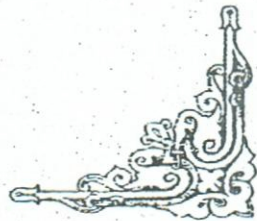
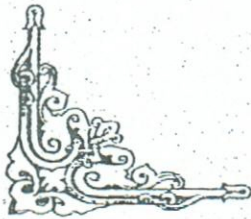
**Lord, God, Almighty, Thank You for being my constant companion  
and let me not forget to turn to you always during the day and night!**





O LORD my God,  
I called to you for help  
and you healed me.

Psalm 30:2





## EPISTLE OF JEREMIAH

*Author*—Jeremiah the prophet

*Date*—Written in the aftermath of the sack of Jerusalem (597 BC) and the exile to Babylon of her leaders, probably from Egypt.

*Major Theme*—*Beware of idols!*

*Background*—The epistle is a diatribe against the sin of idolatry as represented by the Baal cult. Jeremiah wrote to the Israelites to exhort and warn them to be free of a sin that must have been on the increase at this time. Because the epistle has very little historical information, it became timeless and was used by certain Church Fathers to combat pagan errors and superstitions practiced in their own day. The epistle conveys a message that heresy and false ideas about God are both ridiculous and untenable.

### Outline

I. Historical Information (vv. 1–6)

II. Condemnation of Idolatry (vv. 7–73)

A. Idols adorned like people (vv. 7–14)

B. Uselessness and helplessness of idols (vv. 15–24)

C. Idols cannot move (vv. 25–28)

D. Idols cannot repay good or evil; they cannot give wealth, save, or heal (vv. 29–39)

E. The Chaldeans even bring shame upon their own idols (vv. 40–44)

F. Idols are the works of human hands (vv. 45–52)

G. Idols are powerless (vv. 53–57)

H. Idols cannot be compared to the sun, moon, stars, animals, etc. (vv. 58–69)

I. Idols compared to scarecrows, brambles, and a corpse (vv. 70–73)

## Prodigal Son

There is nothing parallel to this wonderful parable in the other New Testament writers. We can observe, even casually, that the description is too restricted; it could just as well have had the better title of The Prodigal Father, who was as reckless in unreservedly loving as the son was in spending and sinning.

In this parable, which no mortal would dared to invent, our Lord reveals the very heart of God in order to inspire the sinner with confidence in his approach to the Almighty. It is not now a question of one out of a hundred, or even one out of ten, but one out of two and these two the only sons of a loving and devoted father.

The contrasts are striking; the younger son and spoiled child, little sensible of the father's devoted love, almost impatient for the father's death so that he may receive his inheritance, departing as soon as he has received his heart's desire. The following details are masterly; loss of money, a great famine, absolute want, a Jewish hireling under a pagan gentile master in a "faraway country," one who has become so desperate he succumbs to being a "feeder of swine." A Jew in a pig sty with his head almost in the pig trough! Revolting circumstances, we can be sure!

In all the allegorization of the parable these details provide a compelling and powerful picture of the sad state to which the sinner is reduced when he departs from his heavenly father. At last his eyes are opened to realize the gravity and seriousness of his situation.

As the gospel insists, the true basis of penance or repentance is the sincere admission of sinfulness with a determination to destroy sin by returning to the embrace of God. The suggestion of the parable is clear: all the time that the son has forgotten his father, the father has not forgotten his son but has looked out daily over the long course of his absence, for his return with eager longing; so that one day, he sees him "when he was yet afar off." Unlike the Pharisees, he is waiting with love and compassion to make the first move towards reconciliation. The erring son is not allowed to finish even the words of the confession he has prepared; there cannot be a question of his being taken back as a hireling; he is restored immediately to the dignity of a son. And lest he be disgraced, the father quickly orders a robe of first quality, a ring for his finger, shoes for his feet,

to complete all and bring us back to the thought of the Messianic Great Supper-Banquet, a feast of the best is prepared with music and celebratory singing.

Is this not a genuine echo of our heavenly Father and the angels about which Christ previously spoke? The Old Testament presents God often in the guise of a Good Shepherd so that every Jew who heard the parable understood the application. There is no lack of consideration for the just, but God's eagerness to pardon the sinner and the great joy among the angels in heaven over even one repentant soul is bound to arouse nobility of soul in all who hear the words of the Lord.

With sudden and deep contrast to the loving enthusiasm of the Father, we witness the unfeeling coldness of the other son, so we recall the Pharisaic complaint about God's joy in pardoning the repentant sinner. There is no longer a note of severity and renunciation but one of confidence in the astonishing kindness of God towards frail human nature, a mercy that even anticipates the repentance of the sinner and pursues him in order to render him worthy of pardon.

That father no doubt daily prayed for the return of his flesh and blood, for the forgiveness of his rebellion. The overwhelming joy in the heart of the father when His grace wins back the heart of a rehabilitated sinner is beautiful to behold. There is little need to further explain the love, mercy and forgiveness of our heavenly Father after listening carefully to this parable. Just as the bitter opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees prejudiced them against the Lord, this parable is offered in answer to their complaints against the familiar friendliness our Lord insists in using to draw sinners to himself. Here we see the true description of God's regard for the truly just: "Son you are always with me and all that I have is yours."

It was long customary to regard this parable as an allegory of the Jews depicted by the elder son and the gentiles sinners, but the younger son does not represent the sinner; he IS the sinner. Some again regard the elder son as representing the real just people, others as the hypocritical just, the Pharisees.

It might also be said that even the faithful and loyal friends of God do not always realize the unplumbed depths of God's mercy. But it would be false to the parable to see the Pharisees in the elder brother; our Lord was far from admitting that they served God faithfully. Today let us accept God's first and constantly shown mercy; let us pursue it for ourselves. Let us, like the prodigal son, take advantage of the deep and abiding love our God has for each of us. Let us hasten then to the confessional in repentance!



# THE GREAT “I AM”

The apostle John states, “Jesus worked many other miracles for his disciples, and not all of them are written in this book. But these are written so that you will put your faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. If you have faith in him, you will have true life” (John 20:30–31).

We can see that John’s aim is two-fold. On one hand, he seeks to demonstrate that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of God.” On the other, he wants people to know the true identity of Jesus, so that “you will have true life.”

When God commanded Moses to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt, Moses asked what God’s name was. God replied, “tell them that the LORD, whose name is ‘I Am,’ has sent you” (Exodus 3:13–15). Jesus shows that he has been in God’s plan from the beginning when he said: “even before Abraham was, I was, and I am” (John 8:58).

In John’s Gospel, Jesus uses the term “I am” to connect himself to aspects of God’s nature and to identify himself as the one who

- supplies all needs
- brings the knowledge about God to all people
- is the way for people to find God and become God’s people
- promises that all who believe in him will have eternal life
- invites everyone to share in the common life as the new people of God

## I AM the bread that gives life!

I am the bread that gives life! Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, and later they died. But the bread from heaven has come down so that no one who eats it will ever die. I am that bread from heaven. Everyone who eats it will live forever. My flesh is the life-giving bread that I give to the people of this world.

**John 6: 47 – 51.**

## I AM the light of the world!

Once again Jesus spoke to the people. This time he said, "I am the light of the world! Follow me and you will not be walking in darkness. You will have the light that gives light"

**John 8: 12.**



## I AM the sheep gate.

Jesus said: "I will tell you for certain that I am the gate for sheep. Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them. I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture. A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I come so everyone would have life, and have it abundantly."

**John 10: 7 -10.**

## I AM the good shepherd.

I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep. Hired workers are not like the shepherd. They do not own the sheep and when they see a wolf coming, they run off and leave the sheep. Then the wolf attacks and scatters the flock. Hired workers run away because they do not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and they know me. Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father and

I give up my life for my sheep. I have other sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must also bring them together, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd.

**John 10: 11 – 16.**

**I AM the one who raises the dead to life!**

Jesus then said to Martha, "I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she replied. "I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God. You are the one we hoped would come into the world."

**John 11: 25 -27.**

**I AM the way, the truth and the life!**

I am the way, the truth and the life! Without me no one can go to the Father.

**John 14: 6.**

**I AM the vine.**

I am the vine and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me. If you do not stay joined to me, you will be thrown away. You will be like dried out branches that are gathered up and burned in a fire. Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want and your prayer will be answered.

**John 15: 5 - 7.**

**I solemnly assure you, before Abraham came to be, I AM**  
**John 8: 58.**

**Where I AM, there will my servant be** John 12: 26.

**I will that they be with me where I AM** John 17: 24.


**I AM he that lives** Revelation 1: 18.

**This is what you shall tell the  
Israelites: I AM sent me to  
you...This is my name forever  
Exodus 3: 14, 15.**

**Say to my soul, "I AM your  
salvation" Psalms 35: 3.**

**Hear my people and I will  
speak; Israel, I will testify  
against you: God, your God,  
I AM Psalms 50: 7.**

# LITURGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

 Virtually all students of the Bible realize there was liturgical worship in Israel. Immediately after the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17), instructions for building the altar were set forth (Ex 20:24-26). Then comes instruction concerning keeping the Sabbath (Ex 23:10-13), the annual feasts (Ex 23:14-19), and the various offerings and furnishings in the sanctuary (Ex 25:1-40). Following this, chapters 26-30 deal with such matters as the design of the tabernacle, the altar, and the outer court, the priests' vestments and their consecration, and instructions for daily offerings.

Liturgical worship is also found in heaven, which is to be expected, since God instructed Moses to make the earthly place of worship as a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb 8:5; see Ex 25:40). Heavenly worship is revealed in such passages as Isaiah 6:1-8, where we see the prophet caught up to heaven for the liturgy, and Revelation 4, which records the apostle John's vision of heaven's liturgy.

The key to comprehending liturgy in the New Testament is to understand the work of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who inaugurates the new covenant. Christ is "a priest forever" (Heb 7:17, 21). It is unthinkable that He would be a priest but not serve liturgically: "forever" suggests He serves continually, without ceasing, in the heavenly tabernacle. Further, He is called not only a priest but a liturgist: "a Minister [Gr. *leitourgos*, lit., "liturgist"] of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected" (Heb 8:2). Christian worship on earth, to be fully Christian, must mirror the worship of Christ in heaven.

Moreover, Christ is "Mediator of a better covenant" (Heb 8:6). What is that covenant? In the words of the Lord, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1Co 11:25). Just as the blood of bulls and goats in the old covenant prefigured Christ's sacrifice to come, so the eucharistic feast brings to us the fullness of His new covenant offering, completed at the Cross and fulfilled in His Resurrection. This once-for-all offering of Himself (Heb 7:27) which He as High Priest presents at the heavenly altar is an offering in which we participate through the Divine Liturgy in the Church. This is the worship of the New Testament Church!

Given this biblical background, a number of New Testament passages take on new meaning.


1 *Acts 13:2*: "As they ministered to the Lord [lit., "as they were in the liturgy of the Lord"] and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul.'" We learn that (a) these two apostles were called by God during worship, and (b) the Holy Spirit speaks in a liturgical setting.

2 *Acts 20:7*: "Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them." Communion was held each Sunday.

3 *Romans 16:16*: "Greet one another with a holy kiss." A kiss of greeting was common in this ancient culture. The "holy kiss," however, was an element of the Christian liturgy that signified the people of God were reconciled to one another, so that they might receive the Body and Blood of Christ in peace.

4 *Ephesians 5:14*: "Awake, you who sleep, / Arise from the dead, / And Christ will give you light." This is an ancient baptismal hymn, already in use by the time Ephesians was written. Other examples of creeds and hymns of New Testament times are seen in 1 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

5 *Hebrews 13:10*: "We have an altar" reveals the continuation of the altar in New Testament worship.

6 *Revelation 1:10*: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." Many scholars believe John saw his vision of Christ during the Sunday liturgy, as the Lord appeared to him "in the midst of the seven lampstands" (Rev 1:13). Lampstands would be found in the Christian sanctuary just as they were in the Hebrew temple. 

# Did You Know That ...

**...worship is not being made to feel good, but to glorify and exalt our Creator God?**

**...it is simple to build a happy life if God is the purpose for your existence?**

**...the believer always looks at what is left, never at what has been lost?**

**...there is joy to be found in nature, and not only on sunny days?**

**...there are two kinds of gratitude; the sudden kind we feel for what we take, and the larger kind we feel for what we give?**

**...the highest appreciation is not to utter words of thanksgiving, but to live by them?**

**...interacting with fellow believers at the Divine Liturgy not only gives you new perspectives, but makes you part of the Body of Christ?**

**...it is better to reflect on your present blessings of which every man has many, not on your past misfortunes of which all men have some?**

**...it is the sweet, simple things of life which are the real ones after all?**

**...he who is not thankful for little things, is not thankful for greater ones?**

**...when you look upon an icon, imagine what it would be like to know the person depicted?**

**...when you think of all the people you know, who are near and dear to you, imagine how many others in the parish can become devoted friends in Christ?**

**...take some time to learn what it is that comforts your soul and then lean on it to make yourself happy and fulfilled?**

**...you will not be happy with more until you are happy with what you already have?**

**...a hug can heal even the deepest wound?**

**...listening is far more important than talking?**

## THE RIGHT MAN AT THE RIGHT TIME

**T**here are so many times in Church History where a certain type of man is needed to deal with a particular issue in the Church. Such is the case of **SAINT TARASIOUS**, who reigned as Patriarch of Constantinople from 784 AD to 806 AD. Tarasius was born and raised in Constantinople, receiving the finest of educations. He was rapidly promoted in the court of Emperor Constantine VI and the Empress Irene and rose to the rank of senator. The Church was in turmoil at this time, caused by the Iconoclasts, who wanted to forbid the use of icons in public and private veneration. The Patriarch -- a man named Paul -- had initially supported the Iconoclasts, but later repented and removed himself from office, choosing to live out his life in a monastery. When the Emperor asked Paul to recommend a successor, he selected Tarasius, who was a layman at the time. After initially refusing, Tarasius agreed to go through the necessary clerical ranks and become Patriarch on one condition: that an Ecumenical Council be convened to settle the issue of the Iconoclasts. Tarasius presided over the 7th Ecumenical Council, which was held in Nicaea in 787 AD. The Council reaffirmed the Church's teaching concerning the veneration of icons, and their prominence in the liturgical life of the faithful was restored.

St. Tarasius' 22 year reign was marked with ongoing humanitarian programs offered by the Church. He personally felt great compassion for orphans and widows, and on Pascha, Tarasius would see that a feast was prepared for them. A man of high moral principle, Tarasius once refused to dissolve the marriage of the Emperor, who wanted to divorce his lawful wife and marry another. Soon after, the Emperor was deposed by his own mother. St. Tarasius will long be remembered for bringing peace to a troubled Church as he fought to preserve the integrity of her teachings.