



72<sup>nd</sup> Year

December 8, 2024

Pamphlet #49 (3732)

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## **THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Luke 13:10-17)**

### **Religious hypocrisy**

*At that time, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.*

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### **THE JOY OF THE MIRACLE**

The scene described in the Gospel passage for the 10th Sunday of Luke is both moving and revealing of the dispositions and sincerity of people, as well as the stance of Christ. In the crowd, there is a hunchbacked woman. Bent over and in pain, she hears the voice without being able to see the figure of Jesus.

Jesus moves towards that distressed woman. He approaches her. With compassion, he tells her: "Woman, you are freed from your

infirmity. You are now well." A force passes through her limbs. Her body is restored. Glorification and thanksgiving fill her heart – amazement, joy, and rejoicing.

## **The hypocrisy of the synagogue ruler**

However, envy and malice taint the atmosphere of joy. The synagogue ruler is indignant, because supposedly the Lord is violating the Sabbath rest. The synagogue ruler is driven by envy, which at that moment dominates his soul, to an abhorrent act. He wants to attack Christ, but does not have the strength to openly express what is happening in his soul. And he finds the shadow of the law to cover his unlawful behavior.

But the Lord immediately responds to the challenge, calling the reaction of the synagogue ruler hypocrisy, and expresses His love for man: "Hypocrite," He says, "this woman who is a daughter of Abraham and whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, should she not be loosed from these bonds on the Sabbath day?"

The synagogue ruler, as previously mentioned, hid behind the commandments and the law of God. However, it is not the first time that bad-intentioned people use the Law and the Gospel of God to achieve their unlawful plans and satisfy their selfish desires. Egotists use the word of God to promote themselves, and those disobedient to the Church misinterpret it. Sometimes, they even cite words from the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers to cover their arrogance and lawlessness, adapting them to fit their case. In this way, instead of conforming to the commandments of God, they hide behind them and use them to cover their personal grudges. This creates heresies and other individual theories and false teachings that disturb the Church of Christ. When the heart is not pure, it cannot correctly interpret the divine word. Because only a pure heart can present it genuinely and clearly. Only a pure heart understands it.

## **Self-awareness, humility, and love**

What we need to know is that Christ is not so much interested in what we do, as in the reason why we do it. Often, our aggression and envy towards others, and furthermore, in the name of Christ, is the devout way by which we establish our own authority,

and it is a consequence of the absence of self-awareness and true love. When we have self-awareness, we acquire true humility. "And humility is followed by gentleness towards others," writes Saint Isaac the Syrian. When humility is not followed by gentleness towards others, it is [merely] humble speech.<sup>1</sup>

## The mind of the Law

Therefore, we all must strive for the purification of the heart and rely on our inspired Fathers, who became vessels of the All-Holy Spirit, illuminated by the Holy Trinity, and thus, through the enlightenment of the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit), they interpreted the word of God and the Holy Scripture. This way, we will learn that we are the ones who prevent our brothers from being treated as insignificant or unimportant. We prepare their transformation by living the spirit of the law, or as Saint Athanasius puts it, "the mind of the law."

May the Triune God enlighten us so that we interpret His law in an Orthodox manner and discover the essence of our faith.

† F. A.

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December 8, 2024: 10th Sunday of Luke

Forefeast of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos; Venerable Patapios (8th century); Sosthenes, Apollo, Tychikos, etc. of the Seventy (1st century); Venerable Parthenios of Chios.

Grave Tone – Eothinon: 2 – Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22 –  
Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

NEXT SUNDAY: December 15, 11th Sunday of Luke  
Epistle: 2 Timothy 1:8-18 – Gospel: Luke 14:16-24, Matthew 22:14

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<sup>1</sup> English Translator's Note: ταπεινολογία (*tapeinología*) translates literally to "humble speech." However, in this context, it implies "false humility," that is, a superficial display of humility, often through humble words that make one appear outwardly humble or virtuous, but where true humility is absent from the heart. Contrast this with ταπεινοφροσύνη (*tapeinophrosýne*), which is "humble-mindedness," or an internal disposition of humility.

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1st Edition, in Greek, Size 20x26 cm, 432 pages

The Patriarchal Instructions of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for the feasts of Christmas and Holy Pascha, the Catechetical Homilies for Holy and Great Lent, and the messages for the Ecclesiastical New Year (September 1st), which is a day of prayer for the protection of the natural environment, have been published in a luxurious volume by the Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece.

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