

FAMILY GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 15:11-32

With the end of Jesus' earthly ministry quickly approaching, He shares this story about the final judgment. We know that Jesus will return and at His second coming all will be judged. Since we do not know when this will occur, it is important that we as Christians remain prepared so that we can be numbered among the sheep. In this passage, we are told very specifically what we will be judged for: our acts of Christian love toward others. This love challenges us to go beyond society's notion of charity and calls us to see Christ in everyone, serving each person as we would Christ. This Sunday is also known as Meatfare Sunday. After this day, we begin to fast from meat products.



For Consideration

- What is the “kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”? What must be done to enter it? What is the “everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels? What will cause us to enter it?
- Why was everyone surprised by where they were going?
- Why is Jesus telling this parable? What does this Gospel passage mean for our lives?

TO DO TOGETHER

Reaching Out

Take a look at the words describing the different people in this passage, those who are (hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, in prison). For each, brainstorm as a family different ways you can help these people. Make a commitment to do at least one between now and Pascha. For ideas or to work through an Orthodox charity, contact the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) at www.iocc.org.

Seeing Christ in Others Challenge

Have your family members try really hard this week (an hopefully longer) to see Christ in others. At dinner each night, share your findings. Challenge everyone to see Christ even in those that appear not to be living in Christ. To illustrate this, explain that Christ is in everyone but sometimes He is hard to see because we sin. Show them an icon of Christ. Apply saran wrap layer by layer to show how the icon slowly disappears but that doesn't change the fact that it is still an icon.

Planning for Lent

Take some time as a family to discuss the upcoming Lenten period and your commitment as a family and individuals. List ways that your fasting, prayer, and almsgiving can benefit others. For guidance, talk with your parish priest.

CLOSING PRAYER

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Both now and forever, Amen.

Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life; let us feed the hungry, let us give the thirsty drink, let us clothes the naked, let us welcome strangers, let us visit those in prison and the sick. The Judge of all the earth will say even to us: 'Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.'

-from the Vespers of Judgment Sunday

FINAL THOUGHT

One Sunday, as parishioners arrived at church, they were horrified to see a dirty homeless man begging for change on the steps as they entered church. Everyone quickly walked by without saying so much as a word to the man. As they took their seats in church, they waited for the pastor, who appeared to be running late. After most of the parishioners arrived, to their horror the homeless man came into the church and walked to the front. When he reached the pulpit, he removed the glasses and hat he was wearing; the parishioners could see that this was not a homeless man but in fact their pastor. Still in the tattered and dirty clothes, he began his sermon by saying, "Today I want to talk about Christian love."

-Author Unknown

