

Second Sunday of the Holy Cross – Prosperity Gospel

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
September 18, 2016
Gospel Reading: Mark 10:1-12
Epistle Reading: 10:18-11:10*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When we are asked, “What is the Gospel?” many words come to mind, such as good news, salvation and God’s word. Yet, the “correct” answer is Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ is the good news, the salvation and the word of God. When the Gospel is preached, Jesus Christ must be preached.

Unfortunately, there is a problem that is rampant in today’s society and it is another Gospel, often referred to as the Prosperity Gospel or Prosperity Theology. According to this gospel/theology, God rewards believers with wealth, health and happiness according to their faith. The problem with this gospel is that when bad or evil happens, we then think that God is not keeping His promise.

This gospel is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many times throughout the Gospels, Christ warns us that whoever decides to believe and follow Him would be subjected to ridicule, persecution and suffering. However, God does send blessings upon us in this life to help others in need and to allow us a foretaste of what is to come. We are encouraged to wait for our true rewards in the life to come.

Today there are many preachers, especially on the television, often called tele-evangelists, who preach this false gospel and unfortunately many believe them. But why do so many believe this false teaching? The answer can be found in today’s epistle reading. In St. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, he writes about other preachers, which he calls “super-apostles” who have come to Corinth to preach another gospel. He writes,

“For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus different from the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit than the one you received, or a different gospel than the one you accepted, you readily welcome it. For I consider myself not at all inferior to those ‘super-apostles’. And even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am certainly not so in knowledge.” (2 Cor. 11:4-6)

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The “super-apostles” in St. Paul’s times, just like the Prosperity Gospel preachers of today, are similar because they preach with charisma and eloquent speech. They enchant and convince many, but they lack the true knowledge of Christ Jesus. They preach what people want to hear, not what is true. And St. Paul, in Christian humility, admits that he may be unskilled in preaching, but he knows what he is talking about.

There is a well know story of people were dining together. After dinner it was agreed that each should recite something. A well-known actor rose and, with eloquence and dramatic art, he declaimed the twenty-third psalm, which begins, “*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*” and sat down to tremendous applause. A quiet, shy man followed him. He too began to recite the twenty-third psalm and at first there was giggling. But before he had ended there was a stillness that was more eloquent than any applause. When he had spoken the last words there was silence, and then the actor leaned across and said, "Sir, I know the psalm, but you know the shepherd."

When listening to preachers and other, we must look for those who truly know Jesus Christ and live the words that they are preaching. This also means we too must feel the Gospel in our daily lives in order to teach others the true Gospel. Knowing facts and reciting verses neither makes us Christians nor shows others the Truth, but merely makes people feel good about themselves and about the sins we commit daily.

Let us search for the Gospel in the preaching of preachers, the teaching of the Church and the words and actions of others. In doing so, we will find the good news, salvation, the word of God and Christ Jesus.

Amen.