

Metropolitan Tikhon's sermon at Divine Liturgy

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

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

What a blessing it is for us to gather in this beautiful cathedral to offer our prayers and our weakness to our Lord, Jesus Christ, and in return to receive His life, His grace, and His strength.

Many times visitors to Orthodox churches are overwhelmed by the beauty of the icons, the intricacy of the services, and the complex hymns that are offered. Sometimes many of us also are overwhelmed by the complexities of life, and we ask ourselves questions [about] how to fulfill that which our Lord commands us — in fact, a very simple commandment.

As we have heard in today's Gospel — as we hear in every Gospel, in every Epistle reading, in every writing of the Fathers, in every life of the saints, and in the multitude of books, teachings, instructions, canons — all this complexity brings us to Christ. All of this complexity is offered, not to make our lives more difficult, but to focus us on the "one thing needful" [Luke 10:42], which is our salvation and life in Christ.

And like the pharisees in today's Gospel, we always have questions — questions of others, and even questions of our Lord. Which is the greatest commandment? Or we may have doubts like the Apostles themselves in the Matins Gospel appointed for today, when we hear how they came before the Lord and worshiped Him, but "some doubted" [Matthew 28:17]. All of us have questions in our hearts, doubts and confusion, but the Lord tells us very clearly that there's one thing needful, and that is to love God with all our soul, and all our mind, and all our heart, and to love our neighbor as ourselves [Luke 10:27].

But even this simple commandment we complicate. We ask, "How are we to do this?" or "What programs must we institute to fulfill these commandments?" or "How can we find the funding?" or "Should we establish a board of trustees to help us to fulfill this commandment?" And, while doing this, we ignore the man lying on the bench — some of us may have seen him on the way to the March for Life, covered in bags and cardboard boxes on a bench, while thousands around him walked by, attentive to their cares and their concerns and their questions. And that is the commandment our Lord asked us to fulfill: to meet that person. Even if we cannot provide him with a program or an institution, we can provide him with a kind word, and with our love, and perhaps some help. This is what our Lord calls us to in today's Gospel — and in every Gospel that we read.



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Saint John Chrysostom, whom we commemorate today, says, "There is no righteous man without sin, but there is no sinner who is bereft of mercy." And so each of us, as we struggle with our own passions, with our own darkness, as we face the struggles in the world around us, should remember that, no matter how deeply we might fall, how insignificant we may feel, how hopeless we may find ourselves, that even we, in our wretchedness, have that hope and that grain of love, of mercy that we can bring out of ourselves and to share with others and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

So may we, as we move forward in our lives, strive to clear our minds of all those thoughts, all those questions, all those doubts that weigh upon us and cloud our lives. And let us focus ourselves on the Light of Christ, which leads the way for us into the Kingdom, and the way for us to see that Light, as the Apostle reminds us. The Prophet David reminds us to follow the Commandments, which are a light to our path. So let us act upon those Commandments and show that love and that mercy to our neighbor, to the stranger that comes before us, so that we indeed may be worthy imitators of our Lord Jesus Christ — the Stranger without a home, Who died for our sins, granted us salvation, and continues to lead us in the direction of the Heavenly Kingdom, where we can worship the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.