

# WEEKLY PEW BULLETIN

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church  
Clearwater, Florida

Rev. James T. Paris, Proistamenos

Rev. Andrew J. Pavlakos, Assistant Priest

**The Lord's Day-12th Sunday of Matthew**

Poimen the Righteous, Bishop of Cordu; Anthousa and Phanourios the Martyrs

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## IT IS EASIER FOR A CAMEL TO PASS THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE THAN FOR A RICH MAN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

This is one of the most memorable sayings of Jesus. I remembered it as a small child, and I am sure most Christians do as well. Many interpretations exist for it, of course. Some say that there was a narrow gate that was used at night to prevent marauders and selfish, clanging merchants from entering. The main gate would be closed, and so if a merchant wanted to enter the city, he would have to get rid of all his wares and baggage and have his camel bow low and crawl on his knees. Some of those who have visited Jerusalem say they saw this narrow gate, this "Eye of the Needle" and have pictures. Thus, to them, this is plausible. Others say it was a play on words in Aramaic with a large, heavy needle with a big eye and a thread made of camel hair. Others say it was a mistake in copying the Greek, for the words for camel and a heavy rope are very closely spelled, making it likely the word was copied in error.

In ancient times, words and numbers were read out loud to be heard for the purpose of recording, and, therefore, the auditor (from the Latin to hear) or the accountant (from the Greek to hear or listen) would write them down. Over time, language changes pronunciation, even meaning, and the Greek letters ita and iota were once pronounced very differently but eventually sounded the same. Thus, the Greek word for camel would in time be pronounced the same as the Greek word for a heavy rope. Consequently, some thought that Jesus was referring to the difficulty of getting a heavy rope through a narrow loop or needle to tie down a ship and keep it from drifting from the dock. This would be difficult, but nevertheless, possible.

Likewise, a camel weighed down by many possessions would have to unload the burden and struggle to get through the narrow gate at night. Again, this would be arduous, but still possible. Why a camel, though? The simple answer is that the camel was the biggest, most prevalent, and conspicuous animal in Palestine, and, consequently, the most familiar for Jesus' image. As a Rabbi, Jesus was familiar with Talmudic

literature, and during the Babylonian Captivity, the Jewish people would have been familiar with elephants, and there existed well known aphorisms, or sayings for the purpose of teaching through familiar images, of the impossibility of an elephant--as opposed to a camel--passing through the eye of a needle.

To cut through the Gordian Knot of all these, and many more explanations, Jesus' point was not literal. It was instructive. This was a very common didactic device in ancient times. The illustration made the saying, and the consequent teaching, all the more memorable. I can bear witness to that as a small child. Jesus' message was a simple one, clearly understood and easy to remember. For a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, it was very difficult---indeed, impossible by his own efforts. Jesus did not say, however, that no rich man would ever enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Moreover, Jesus did not say what kind of rich man. Life itself teaches us that there are many good rich men as indeed there are many good poor men. Tragically, there are bad rich men, but there are also bad poor men--as well as all those in between. In some ways, all of us are "rich," so we better all be careful and not judge the rich or cavalierly and facilely absolve ourselves of our responsibilities by conveniently saying to ourselves that we are not "rich" and Jesus' teaching does not apply to us, as if we get a free pass.

Jesus' Message as the Teacher of All applies to all of us. One may be rich in possessions, and another may be rich knowledge. One may be rich in physical prowess, and another may be rich in art. One may have the gift of eloquence and another the gift of craft. We are all, therefore, rich in some way. What matters is what we do with our wealth, riches, possessions, gifts, and talents. Do we share them? Or do we hoard them? Do we give them and of ourselves and thereby imitate Christ? Or do we keep them selfishly? If we hoard and do not share, we become burdened. We begin to worry about things. We worry about protecting them, insuring them, defending them, and thus, we become trapped, fettered, and imprisoned by them. Instead of unburdening us, liberating us, and saving us as we liberate,

**First Eothinon Gospel****Matthew 28:16-20**

The Disciples hastened to the mountain for the Lord's ascension from the earth; and there the Lord appeared to them. They worshipped Him, and were instructed about the universal authority He was given; and they were sent out to the whole world to preach the resurrection from the dead and the restoration to heaven. And He, who never lies, promised to be with them forever; He is Christ our God and the Savior of our souls.

**Third Tone Apolytikion**

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord has shown the mighty power of His arm. He has trampled down death by death, becoming the first born of the dead. He has delivered us from the depths of hell and has granted to all the world His great mercy. (p. 107 of Hymnal)

**Apolytikion of Pentecost**

Blessed are You, O Christ our God. You made wise men of poor fishermen, by sending down upon them Your Holy Spirit, and through them, You caught the whole world. O Lover of mankind, Glory to You. (p. 172 of Liturgy Hymnal)

**Kontakion of Nativity of Theotokos**

Your holy birth delivered Joachim and Anna from the reproach of childlessness and liberated Adam and Eve from death's corruption, O Pure One. Thus freed from the stain of sin, we your people honor your birth, crying out to you: "A Woman thought barren brings forth the Theotokos who nourishes Christ our Life. (p. 229 of Hymnal)

**Epistle: 12th Sunday**

I Corinthians 15:1-11 (p. 108 of Liturgy Book)

**Gospel: 12th Sunday of Matthew**

Matthew 19:16-24 (p. 221 of Liturgy Book)

Creed in Greek

help, and empower others, we become weighed down and unable to move and fit through the "needle" or gate to the City of Peace--that is, the Kingdom of God.

Things are given to us to help and empower others for the Glory of God, and ultimately, not for others, but for us. What we have, is lent to us, or invested with us by God, to leverage by His Grace, through sharing, for the benefit of others and the Glory of God. In the end, it will not be what we have, own, or possess that matters for our eternal salvation. It will be what we did with God's Gifts that He entrusted to us. If we shared them, they will accrue, grow, and multiply through others, long after we are gone, and we will participate in an immortality through our good deeds on earth as we will one day participate in the immortality in Heaven. What we sow, we will reap. If we share and sow good now for this small time that we have on earth, we will reap the rich harvest for eternity in Heaven. Overburdened with our concern for goods and possessions, like the merchant and his camel, we cannot fit through the gate. If we liberate ourselves of our cares and anxieties and share and give, we will be able to pass through the gate, from this temporal life to the eternal life.

Thus, we must humble ourselves and get on our knees and pray, knowing that we are undeserving of God's Gifts and His Grace, but also knowing that we must accept and cooperate with His Grace and multiply His Gifts providentially entrusted to our care for others, ourselves, and for Him; for this is His Will for us--eternal salvation. My brothers and sisters in Christ, how many household wares, carpets, trinkets, and coins do we need? How much can we sell for profit? How much do we really need when we cannot take it with us? Naked, humble, and helpless we came into this world, and naked, humble, and helpless, we will leave it. That is a guarantee. No investment or insurance can guarantee you eternity. There is no infinite rate of return for eternity on earth. The only guarantee that is infinite and eternal is above, not on earth. Share and you will inherit eternity. Give and you will live forever. As Christ shared, gave, and forgave, so must we, and liberated of our possessions, burdens, cares, and anxieties, by His Grace, we too may one day ascend in Glory and enter through the Main Gates of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The lesson is hyperbole. If we are rich in things and not rich towards God, as the illustration of the elephant, camel, or heavy rope makes clear, it will be impossible for us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. However, everyone of us is rich in some way, and so, we must gratefully and joyously share our respective riches with others for the Glory of God and the salvation of our souls. Lowering ourselves humbly and prayerfully, without cares and concerns for this world, but with our care and concern for God, we, too, can make it into the Kingdom.

Yours in Christ our God, Who having emptied Himself of All His Power and Glory, humbled and lowered Himself for us on earth, so that we may one day be exalted with Him in Heaven,

✠Father Jim

THIS WEEK'S EVENTS



**DONATION REQUEST FOR PARISH NURSE MINISTRY**

As we transition our Parish Nurse Ministry, we would like to create a workspace for the maintenance of personal and confidential information. To that end, we are seeking the donation of a desk with one or two locking drawers. Having this on hand and receiving it by way of donation will allow for our Parish Nurse Ministry to function more fully at our facilities and maintain the information that is must be kept in a proper order. Your consideration of this request is greatly appreciated.

May God Bless You,  
 Father Jim Paris &  
 Michael Boutzoukas,  
 Parish Council President

**Sunday, August 27-12th Sunday of Matthew**

St. Stephen's Camp Retreat (GOYA)

Food Drive

- |         |                                 |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| 8:15am  | Orthros (Matins)                |
| 9:30am  | Divine Liturgy                  |
| 9:30am  | Church School                   |
| 10:30am | Adult Religious Education Class |
| 11:15am | Town Hall Meeting               |
| 11:30am | Altar Orientation (Acolytes)    |
| 5:30pm  | Senior Hellas Practice          |

**Tuesday, August 29-Beheading of St. John the Baptist**

9:30am Divine Liturgy

**Wednesday, August 30**

- |        |                                      |
|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 5:00pm | Adult Basketball                     |
| 7:00pm | Metropolis Council of Tampa Bay Mtg. |

**Friday, September 1-Ecclesiastical New Year**

9:30am Divine Liturgy

**Sunday, September 3-13th Sunday of Matthew**

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|--------|------------------|
| 8:15am | Orthros (Matins) |
| 9:30am | Divine Liturgy   |



**TOWN HALL MEETING**

**TODAY**

**11:15AM MATTHEOS HALL**



**TODAY DURING COFFEE HOUR**

Town Hall Meeting, Disco Ticket Sales

**OUR 2017 STEWARDSHIP PROGRESS**

**Goal:**\$445,000 - **Received:**\$277,813 - **Remaining:** \$167,187

**Per Family Per Month:** \$73

*Please help our community reach its stewardship goal by fulfilling your pledge, increasing your pledge, or making a pledge. Thank you!*

**TOWN HALL MEETING**  
**SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 2017**  
**START TIME – PROMPTLY AT 11:15 AM**

**ANTICIPATED LENGTH 20-25 MINUTES OF PRESENTATION AND 15 MINUTES Q&A**

Proposed Topic Outline

- Update on the status of the conceptual drawings
- A description of the steps that will follow over the next several months
- Introduction of Owner's Representative and explanation of practice
- Progress update on effort to reduce construction costs
- Capital campaign update
- Brief update on bridge loan
- Q&A – limited to 15 minutes for public questions and we will remain for individual questions

WE DO INTEND TO BEGIN AT 11:15 AND  
LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE

Fr. Jim Paris  
Michael Boutzoukas



**NEW WIFI**

A new wifi network has been set up in the Hall and the Churchnasium.  
Please see a Parish Council member or refer to the signs posted for the  
network name and password.

**PRAYERS FOR THOSE IN NEED**

To have a name added to the prayer list, please contact Esther Tsikos (727) 736-3409 or email her at [esthertsikos@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:esthertsikos@tampabay.rr.com).

Please pray for the following people: Ryan, Athena, Petros and Christina, George, Anna, Margaret, Demetrios, Steve, Theodore, Angela, Anna, Teresa, Connie, Christine, Tiffany, John, Ginny, Kiersten, Fred, Bartholomew, Sheri, Catherine, Athanasios, Evangelia, Eleni, Andy, Jack, Despina, Frederica, Mary, Georgia, Peggy, Faye, Sophia, Frank, Ruth, Irene, Raymond, Zacharoula, Esther, Manoli, Paraskevi, Fred, Leonidas, Gus

