

***THE VINEYARD TENANTS  
GOD’S MESSENGERS  
THE CALLING OF THE TWELVE***

**September 22, 2024  
13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Revision C**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 21:33-42  
EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24**

Today’s Gospel lesson is also found in Mark 12:1-12 and Luke 20:9-19. This Gospel lesson, usually from Matthew, is commonly used in the West in late September. Today’s Epistle lesson is not used in the West at all.

**Gospel: Matthew 21:33-42**

The setting for the Gospel lesson is the middle of Holy Week. Jesus came to the Temple to teach and was confronted by the chief priests and elders. They asked Him, “By what authority are you doing these things?” (Matthew 21:23). Jesus answered, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: the Baptism of John – where was it from? From heaven or from man?” (Matthew 21:24-25).

They reasoned that if they said, “from heaven”, He will say, “Why then did you not believe him?” But they also reasoned that if they said, “from men”, the multitudes may stone them to death, for they all count John as a prophet. Therefore, they answered, “We do not know.” And Jesus didn’t tell them by what authority He worked either (Matthew 21:25-27).

This exchange indicates their hardness of heart. They knew that John was a prophet and his baptism was from heaven. They even sought to be baptized by John (Matthew 3:7-12) but John refused to baptize them because they rejected the will of God for themselves (Luke 7:30).

**Table of Contents**

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-42.....	930
Doing the Will of God.....	931
Divine Vengeance.....	933
They Will Respect My Son.....	938
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24.....	941
Background for the Church in Corinth.....	941
The Seventy as Messengers.....	942
Stand Fast in the Faith.....	944
Respect for Other Christians.....	947
The Example of Members of the Seventy Apostles.....	948
The Kiss of Peace.....	950
Let Him Be Anathema.....	950
Maranatha.....	955
Biography of the Seventy Apostles Mentioned.....	958

## Doing the Will of God

Immediately after this, Jesus said to the Chief Priests and the elders: “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of *his* father? They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw *it*, you did not afterward relent and believe him” (Matthew 21:28-32).

Explaining this, Jesus stated that John came to Israel as the Forerunner in the way of righteousness but they did not believe him. Tax collectors (of whom the author Matthew was one) and harlots did believe him (Matthew 21:31-32).

John Chrysostom explains<sup>1</sup> it thus: John the Baptist came to them and they did not accept him. John was very dramatic about this and said to the Pharisees and Sadducees,

“Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones” (Matthew 3:7-9).

John did not come to the tax collectors and harlots, but they received him. Jesus told the Jewish leaders:

“Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw *it*, you did not afterward relent and believe him” (Matthew 21:31-33).

Our take-away from this exchange is that it is crucially important to DO the Will of God and obey Him in what He tells us to do. The Chief Priests and the elders were unwilling to do that.

Chrysostom continued<sup>2</sup>: “For if Christ had said simply, harlots ‘enter the kingdom of God before you’, the word would have seemed to them to be offensive; but now, being uttered after they pronounced their own judgment (from the first parable) it appears to be not too hard. Notice by how many things is shown the commendation of the publicans and harlots, and the charge against the Jewish leaders. To you he came, not to them. You didn’t believe, this didn’t offend them. They believed, this didn’t profit you. But the word, ‘enter the kingdom of God before you’, is not as though the publicans were following, but as having a hope, if they were willing. For nothing, so much as jealousy, arouses the grosser sort. Therefore, Christ is always saying,

---

<sup>1</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVII, 3.

<sup>2</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVII, 3.

‘The first shall be last, and the last first’ (Matthew 19:30). Therefore, He brought in both harlots and publicans, that they might provoke the Jewish leaders to jealousy.”

The imagery of the vineyard was carried over into the second parable also; where the vineyard represents the entire Old Covenant relationship of Israel to the Lord. Isaiah used a very similar parable where “the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel” (Isaiah 5:7). John the Baptist was one of the messengers the Lord sent to His vineyard. In iconography, John is depicted having wings like an angel since the word “angel” means messenger (Malachi 3:1).

Basil the Great described<sup>3</sup> the benefit to mankind of the grapevine, and how we ourselves are like a grapevine. Like a grapevine, the Church is held together by the tendrils<sup>4</sup> of love. Our Father digs the ground we grow in to provide nourishment (fertilizer) for us. This helps us to distance ourselves from the cares of the world. He also prunes us so that we produce the maximum fruit possible.

“Trees contribute good illustrations of our lives; and offer their various fruits to man and provide him with plentiful nourishment. Such is the grapevine, which produces wine to make glad the heart of man; such is the olive tree, whose fruit brightens his face with oil. How many things in nature are combined in the same plant! In a grapevine, roots, green and flexible branches, which spread themselves far over the earth, buds, tendrils, bunches of sour grapes and ripe grapes. The sight of a grapevine, when observed by an intelligent eye, serves to remind us of our nature. We remember the parable where the Lord calls Himself a grapevine and His Father the husbandman, and every one of us who are grafted by faith into the Church the branches. He invites us to produce fruits in abundance, for fear lest our sterility should condemn us to the fire (John 15:1-6). He constantly compares our souls to vines. ‘My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill’ (Isaiah 5:1) and elsewhere, I have ‘planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower’ (Matthew 21:33). He calls human souls His grapevine, those souls whom He has surrounded with the authority of His precepts and a guard of angels. ‘The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them’ (Psalm 34:7). Further: He has planted for us, so to say, props, in establishing in His Church apostles, prophets, teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28); and raising our thoughts by the example of the blessed in olden times, He has not allowed them to drag on the earth and be crushed under foot. He wishes that the clasping of love, like the tendrils of the grapevine, should attach us to our neighbors and make us rest on them, so that, in our continual aspirations towards heaven, we may imitate these grapevines, which raise themselves to the tops of the tallest trees. He also asks us to allow ourselves to be dug about; and that is what the soul does when it disassociates itself from the cares of the world, which are a weight on our hearts. He, then, is freed from carnal affections and from the love of riches. Far from being dazzled by them, he disdains and despises this miserable vain glory; he is, so to say, dug about and at length breathes, free from the useless weight of earthly

---

<sup>3</sup> Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron*, V, 6.

<sup>4</sup> The “tendrils” of a grapevine are short, tough 2 mm diameter growths that wrap themselves tightly around whatever frame is holding the grapevine off the ground. A community of Christians held together by such tough tendrils is very strong.

thoughts. Nor must we, in the spirit of the parable, put forth too much wood<sup>5</sup>, that is to say, live with ostentation, and gain the applause of the world; we must bring forth fruits, keeping the proof of our works for the husbandman. Be 'like a green olive tree in the house of God' (Psalm 52:8), never destitute of hope, but decked through faith with the bloom of salvation. Thus you will resemble the eternal verdure of this plant and will rival it in fruitfulness, if each day sees you giving abundantly in alms."

## **Divine Vengeance**

In the second parable Jesus told (our Gospel lesson), a certain landowner planted a vineyard, set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. Recent excavations have shown that the purpose of the tower was similar to that of a wine cellar today for aging wine. The expectation, then, was quality wine!<sup>3</sup> He then leased it to vinedressers and went to a far country. At various times He sent His servants to receive fruit from it but the vinedressers beat, killed and stoned them. Finally, He sent His Son saying, "They will respect My Son." But the vinedressers said, "This is the Heir, let us kill Him and seize His inheritance"; and they did so (Matthew 21:33-39).

Jesus then asked them what the owner of the vineyard will do to the vinedressers when He comes. They replied, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease His vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to Him the fruits in their seasons" (Matthew 21:40-41).

Taking them at their own words, just as the Prophet Nathan had done with King David (2 Samuel 12:1-10; compare Luke 19:22), the Lord said, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:22, 23; compare Isaiah 28:16). He continued, "The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it." "And whoever falls on this cornerstone will be broken, but on whomever it falls; it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:42-44).

At this, they tried to lay hands on Jesus, but couldn't do it publicly because the crowds regarded Jesus as a Prophet (Matthew 21:46). Two days later on Maundy Thursday, they were able to lay hands on Him at night, thanks to Judas' betrayal (Matthew 26:47ff).

In this parable, there is some important imagery that applies to us today. The vineyard is the Kingdom of God on earth, and the vinedressers then were the chief priests and the elders. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21:43). The Church is now that nation as the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16) and has been given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16:19, 18:18).

---

<sup>5</sup> This is a reference to the pruning done by growers to their grapevines in the winter. Most of the fruit is carried by the new growth in the spring. Therefore, all the previous year's growth is pruned away leaving just two buds every two inches for the next year's growth – and the maximum fruit.

<sup>3</sup> Walsh, Carey, "God's Vineyard" Bible Review, Aug. 1998, pg. 43-49.

The hedge around the vineyard was the Mosaic Law, which tended to keep outsiders out and the faithful in. The fruit produced by the vineyard, in the words of John Chrysostom<sup>6</sup> was “their obedience, the proof of it by their works”. Thus, there was a complete disconnect between what was done and what should have been done. All this was done both to expose their wickedness and to demonstrate His love toward man.

“And ‘He sent His servants’, that is, the prophets, ‘to receive the fruit’; that is, their obedience, the proof of it by their works. But they even here showed their wickedness, not only by failing to give the fruit, after having enjoyed so much care, which was the sign of idleness, but also by showing anger towards them that came. They that didn’t have anything to give when they owed, should not have been indignant, nor angry, but should have entreated. But they not only were indignant, but even filled their hands with blood; while deserving punishment, themselves inflicted punishment”.

To this end the vineyard had a winepress (Matthew 21:33) to help extract the maximum from the fruit and a tower as a beacon to the world (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 28:1, 28:12; Isaiah 42:6). A practical purpose of the tower in ancient vineyards was to provide a cool quiet place for aging the wine. The implication of the vineyard in the Gospel lesson is that high quality wine will be produced.

John Chrysostom commented<sup>7</sup> that He left little for them to do but to take care of what was there and to preserve what was given to them.

“Notice both His great care, and the excessive idleness of the Jewish nation. For what pertained to the vinedressers, He Himself did, the hedging it round about, the planting the vineyard, and all the rest, and He left little for them to do; to take care of what was there, and to preserve what was given to them. Nothing was left undone, but all accomplished; not even so did they profit from this, when they had enjoyed such great blessings from Him. For when they had come out of Egypt, He gave a law, set up a city, built a temple, and prepared an altar. When ‘He went into a far country’, this means that He bore with them for a long time, not always bringing the punishments close upon their sins; for by His going into a far country, He means His great long-suffering.”

Today we have a similar situation, where the priests and bishops have taken the place of the prophets as the Lord’s servants sent to receive the fruit of the vineyard. How many times do they urge us to forgive one another, to embrace and to be reconciled within the Body of Christ (the vineyard), but we refuse. In the Lord’s eyes, refusal to reconcile and forgive is as bad as murder (Matthew 5:21-26).

Other examples of the fruit of the vineyard are our words of praise to God (Hebrews 13:15), and our deeds that show love to our brothers and sisters (Matthew 25:31-46)

---

<sup>6</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVIII, 1.

<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIV, 1.

Chrysostom also pointed out<sup>8</sup> that Jesus spoke by a parable, that themselves might pass the sentence, which was also done in the case of David, when He passed judgment on the parable of Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-14). But notice, how just the sentence is, when the very persons that are to be punished condemn themselves.

“Notice how Christ prophesies even the place where He was to be slain. ‘They took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him’ (Matthew 21:39). Luke said that Christ declared what these men should suffer; and they said, ‘God forbid’ (Luke 20:16). Christ added the testimony of Scripture: ‘Then He looked at them and said, “What then is this that is written: ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone’? Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder”’ (Luke 20:17-18). Matthew said that they themselves delivered the sentence. But this is not a contradiction. Both things were done, both themselves passed the sentence against themselves; and again, when they perceived what they had said, they added, ‘God forbid’. Christ also set up the prophet Nathan against them, persuading them that certainly this would be. Nevertheless, not even so did He plainly reveal the Gentiles, that He might afford them no handle, but signified it darkly by saying, ‘Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it’” (Matthew 21:43).

“Then, that they might know that the penalty is not limited to their being cast out, He added the punishments also, saying, ‘Whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder’ (Matthew 21:44; Luke 20:18). He speaks here of two ways of destruction, one from stumbling and being offended; for this is, ‘Whoever falls on this stone’: but another from their capture, calamity, and utter destruction, which also He clearly foretold, saying, ‘It will grind him to powder’ (Matthew 21:44). By these words He darkly intimated His own resurrection also.”

“Now the Prophet Isaiah said that He blames the vineyard (Isaiah 5:3), but He particularly accuses the rulers of the people. He said, ‘What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?’ (Isaiah 5:4). Again elsewhere, ‘What injustice have your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, have followed idols, and have become idolaters?’ (Jeremiah 2:5). And again, ‘O my people, what have I done to you? Wherein have I grieved you? Wherein have I troubled you?’ (Micah 6:3). This shows their thankless disposition, and that when in the enjoyment of all things, they returned it by the contraries; but here He expresses it with yet greater force. For He does not plead, Himself, saying, ‘What ought I to have done that I have not done?’, but brings in themselves to judge, that nothing might be lacking, and to condemn themselves. When they say, ‘He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons,” (Matthew 21:41), they say nothing else than this: publishing their sentence with much greater force. With this Stephen also criticizes them, which thing most of all stung them, that having enjoyed always much providential care, they returned

---

<sup>8</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVIII, 2.

to their benefactor the contraries. This very thing itself was a very great sign, that not the punisher, but the punished, were the cause of the vengeance brought upon them.”

Chrysostom also compared<sup>9</sup> the Jewish leaders with Cain and with their fathers who killed the prophets. This group was worse, however, in that they did not learn from the mistakes and the resultant punishment of the others. They even condemned themselves in the parable Jesus told about the vineyard.

“Christ also added unspeakable severity to the vengeance, saying, that the Jewish leaders shall suffer more grievous things than anyone; since by none of these things did they become better. But if anyone says, ‘Why do they suffer more grievously than anyone?’, we would say, ‘Because they have first committed more grievous things than anyone, and by none of the things that have been done to them have they been brought to a sound mind.’”

“Have you heard of Lamech saying, ‘Lamech said to his wives: “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, and a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold”’ (Genesis 4:23-24); that is, ‘I am deserving of more punishment than Cain’. Why could this be? He did not slay his brother; but because not even by Cain’s example was he brought to a better mind. This is what God said elsewhere, ‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image. For I, the Lord your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me’ (Exodus 20:4-5). Not as though one were to suffer punishment for the crimes committed by others, but inasmuch as they who, after many sin and have been punished, yet have not grown better, but have committed the same offenses, are justly worthy to suffer their punishments also.”

“Notice how he also mentioned Abel, indicating that this murder likewise was of envy<sup>10</sup>. Didn’t the Jewish leaders know what Cain suffered? Did God not exact the severest penalty? Didn’t they know what things their fathers suffered when they slew the prophets; were they not delivered over to punishment and inflictions of vengeance without number? How then did the Jewish leaders not become better? And why do I speak of the punishments of their fathers, and what they suffered? They who themselves condemn their fathers (Matthew 23:30), how is it they do worse? Even they themselves have declared that ‘He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons’ (Matthew 21:41). What favor then will they have after this, committing such things after such a sentence?”

Chrysostom further pointed out<sup>11</sup> the implications of the Jewish leaders’ (correct) answer to Jesus’ parable “He will destroy those wicked men miserably”. This occurred about 40 years later with the utter destruction of Jerusalem. While they refused to know Him before the

---

<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIV, 2.

<sup>10</sup> That is, just like the murder of Christ! See Matthew 27:18.

<sup>11</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LIII, 2.

Crucifixion, they came to know Him after the destruction of Jerusalem, when their house was left to them desolate, after He spoke to them in His wrath.

“Most people paid little attention to Christ’s words: ‘If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all peoples to Myself’ (John 12:32). But to the Jewish leaders, Jesus said in essence, ‘Do you not expect that then you shall certainly rid yourselves of Me, and slay Me? But I tell you that then you shall most know that I AM, by reason of the miracles, the resurrection, and the destruction of Jerusalem’. For all these things were sufficient to display His power. He didn’t say, ‘Then you shall know who I am’; but instead He said, ‘when you shall see that I suffer nothing from death, then you shall know that I AM, that is, the Christ, the Son of God, who governs all things, and am not opposed to the Father’. For which cause, He added, ‘and of Myself I speak nothing’ (John 8:28). For you shall know both My power and My unanimity with the Father. The, ‘of Myself I speak nothing’, shows that His Substance doesn’t differ from that of the Father, and that He utters nothing except that which is in the mind of the Father. ‘For when you have been driven away from your place of worship, and you are not allowed even to serve Him as before, then you shall know that He does this to avenge Me, and because He is angry with those who would not hear Me’. As though He had said, ‘Had I been an enemy and a stranger to God, He would not have stirred up such wrath against you’. This also Isaiah declares, ‘for his life is taken away from the earth; because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death. And I will give the wicked for his burial, and the rich for his death; for he practiced no iniquity, nor craft with his mouth’ (Isaiah 53:9 LXX); and David, ‘Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his fury’ (Psalm 2:5); and Christ Himself, ‘See! Your house is left to you desolate’ (Matthew 23:38). His parables declare the same thing when He said, ‘When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably”’ (Matthew 21:40-41). Notice that everywhere He speaks thus, because He is not yet believed! If He will destroy them, as He will, for, ‘But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me’ (Luke 19:27). Why did He say that the deed is not His, but His Father’s? He addresses Himself to their weakness, and at the same time honors Him that begat Him. Therefore, He did not say, ‘I leave your house desolate’, but, ‘Your house is left to you desolate’ (Matthew 23:38); He has put it impersonally. But by saying, ‘How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!’ (Matthew 23:37), and then adding, ‘Your house is left to you desolate’, He shows that He wrought the desolation. Since He told them, when you were benefited and healed of your infirmities, you would not know Me, therefore you shall know Who I am when you are punished.”

God the Father is sometimes quoted as saying what we might misinterpret as expressing ignorance. But this is not the case. Chrysostom pointed out<sup>12</sup> that God said these things to show mercy to the people involved.

---

<sup>12</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 3.



“The Father will be found to be saying things that some might interpret as ignorance. For He Himself said, ‘Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where *are* you?”’ (Genesis 3:9) and, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know’ (Genesis 18:20-21). Elsewhere He said, ‘*They are* impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse -- for they *are* a rebellious house -- yet they will know that a prophet has been among them’ (Ezekiel 2:4-5). In the Gospel too, ‘Then last of all he sent his Son to them, saying, “They will respect my son”’ (Matthew 21:37), all which are expressions of ignorance. But not in ignorance did He say these things, but as showing mercy such as became Him. In the case of Adam, that He might drive him to make an excuse for his sin. In that of the Sodomites, that He might teach us never to be positive of one’s guilt, till we are present at the very deeds. In that of the prophet, that the prediction might not appear in the judgment of the foolish a kind of compulsion to disobedience. And in the parable in the gospel, that He might show that they ought to have done this, and to have revered the Son. But that we may not be overly curious, notice what great ignorance there seems to be, if He doesn’t know even him that is set over. For He blesses him indeed, ‘Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing”’ (Matthew 24:45-46).

### **They Will Respect My Son**

Finally, the landowner sent His son, saying, “They will respect My Son” (Matthew 21:37). Why should He say this after such a long history of abusing the prophets? Chrysostom’s comments are (1) that this is what they ought to have done, (2) that this is another extension of the Lord’s long-suffering, and (3) that they might fill up the measure of their fathers’ guilt (Matthew 23:29-32) and be without excuse (compare Isaiah 1:15, Hosea 4:2, Micah 3:10). To this one might add all the incredible miracles Jesus performed. Certainly this should have generated considerable respect.

The inheritance that the vinedressers – and the chief priests – wanted to seize was control of the Kingdom of God on earth. This was why Satan was so eager to crucify the Son of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-8) and why he was willing to trade all the kingdoms of the world for it (Matthew 4:8-10).

As to what the landowner will do to the wicked vinedresser, the chief priests’ reply was prophetic. They themselves are now in hell (Matthew 23:34-36) and the vineyard has been leased to other vinedressers who are expected to render to Him the fruits in their seasons (Matthew 21:41-43). The fruits vary from season to season: sometimes fasting and repentance; other times feasting and thanksgiving. If we, like them, refuse to render to Him the fruit He expects, He may lease the vineyard to others also. Paul uses a similar analogy: the grafting of

the Gentiles as branches into a cultivated olive tree and cutting off the natural branches. “Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either” (Romans 11:16-26).

The chief priests realized the impact of what Jesus was saying: that is, the Kingdom of God being given to others. Luke records their reaction as “may it never be!” (Luke 20:16). But the Lord quoted Psalm 118:22-23 about the Stone which the builders (the chief priests) rejected becoming the chief cornerstone and how “this was the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:23, Matthew 21:42). This Psalm was also quoted by the Apostle Peter in testifying before the Sanhedrin a few months later (Acts 4:8-12) and by Peter later in his first Epistle (1 Peter 2:7).

How about us? Are we offended by some things the Scripture teaches? Do we have little areas of our lives that are off limits? When God’s messengers come to us in our part of the vineyard and expect fruit in its season, we need to be ready to receive them, to welcome what they say and to thank God for His bounty. As the Lord said, “He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward” (Matthew 10:41).

Ambrose of Milan stated<sup>13</sup> that some of the Arians of his day did not respect the Son of God; they made a point that inferiors tend to be sent by superiors; therefore, they say Christ is inferior to the Father. Ambrose brought up many counter examples of this from the Scriptures. If the Arians were correct in their interpretation, Christ would have been inferior to the Jews to whom He was sent and also inferior to Pontius Pilate.

“If you do not accept the truth of His mission according to the flesh, as the Apostle spoke of it (Romans 8:3), and raise out of a mere word a decision against it, to enable you to say that inferiors tend to be sent by superiors; what answer will you give to the fact that the Son was sent to men? For if you think that he who is sent is inferior to him by whom he is sent, you must learn also that an inferior has sent a superior, and that superiors have been sent to inferiors. For Tobias sent Raphael the archangel (Tobit 9:1-6), and an angel was sent to Baalam (Numbers 22:22-35), and the Son of God to the Jews.”

“Was the Son of God inferior to the Jews to whom He was sent? For of Him it is written: ‘Last of all He sent to them His only Son, saying, “they will respect My Son”’ (Matthew 21:37). Notice that He mentioned first the servants, then the Son, that you may know that God, the only-begotten Son according to the power of His Godhead, has neither name nor lot in common with servants. He is sent to be revered, not to be compared with the household.”

“And rightly did He add the word ‘My Son’, that we might believe He came, not as one of many, nor as one of a lower nature or of some inferior power, but as true from Him that is true, as the Image of the Father’s Substance.”

“Suppose, however, that he who is sent is inferior to him by whom he is sent. Christ then would be inferior to Pilate; for Pilate sent Him to Herod (Luke 23:7). But a word does not change His power. Scripture, which says that He was sent from the Father, says that He was sent from a ruler.”

---

<sup>13</sup> Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, V, vii, 94-98.

“Therefore, if we sensibly hold to those things which are worthy of the Son of God, we need to understand Him as being sent in such a way that the Word of God was sent out of the incomprehensible and ineffable mystery of the depths of His majesty. He gave Himself for comprehension to our minds, so far as we could lay hold of Him, not only when He ‘emptied’ Himself (Philippians 2:7), but also when He dwelt in us, as it is written: ‘You are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them”’ (2 Corinthians 6:16). Elsewhere God said: ‘Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech’ (Genesis 11:7). God, indeed, never descends from any place; for He says: ‘Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I cannot see him? says the Lord; do I not fill heaven and earth?’ (Jeremiah 23:24). But He seems to descend when the Word of God enters our hearts, as the prophet has said: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God’ (Isaiah 40:3). We are to do this, so that, as He Himself promised, He may come together with the Father and make His abode with us” (John 14:23).

## ***GOD'S MESSENGERS***

**August 26, 2018**  
**13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Revision C**

**Epistle: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24**

Today's Epistle lesson is not used in the West at all.

### **Background for the Church in Corinth**

Paul founded the Church in Corinth about 51 AD toward the end of his Second Missionary Journey and stayed there a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Silas was traveling with Paul at the time along with Luke, Timothy and Andronicus, where all but Paul were of the original Seventy. Luke was left behind to oversee the Macedonian Churches, along with Andronicus and his wife Junia. (Note switch in tenses from "we" to "they" and back to "we" in Acts 16:16, 17:1, 20:6). Silas was left behind in Corinth and was later Bishop of Corinth. (Note that we never hear from Silas again traveling with Paul after he arrived in Corinth, Acts 18:5). Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, and they traveled with Paul when he moved on to Ephesus.

Before Paul arrived in Corinth for an extended stay again in late 55 AD, he wrote four letters to Corinth (two of which are lost) and paid the Church one brief visit. For more details on this sequence of events, see the Epistle lesson for the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. In the interval from 52 to 55 AD, Apollos and the Apostle Peter visited Corinth. Apollos was one of the original Seventy, but must have been back home in Alexandria at the time of Pentecost. He knew only the baptism of John in 53 AD when he came to Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28). Aquila and Priscilla, the overseers Paul left in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19), straightened Apollos out and also wrote to the Churches in Achaia (Athens and Corinth) to receive Apollos when he arrived (Acts 18:27). Apollos proceeded to help out by vigorously refuting the Jews publicly showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:28). In 1 Corinthians 3:8, Paul said that he and Apollos are one; that is, of one mind in the work of establishing the Churches.

In summarizing Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey, he started with Silas, picked up Andronicus in Tarsus, Timothy in Lystra, Luke in Troas and Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. Urbanus was left behind in Tarsus, Luke, Andronicus and Junia in Macedonia, Olympas in Philippi, Jason in Thessalonica, Silas in Corinth and Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus.

The same can be said for the relationship between Paul and Peter. Peter visited Corinth in the early 50's on his way to Rome. He obviously made a big impression in Corinth since there were factions that had developed by 55 AD (1 Corinthians 1:12) centered around Paul, Apollos, Peter and none of the above (i.e. Christ!!)

From a detailed study of Paul's Missionary Journeys<sup>14</sup>, we see that Paul worked with at least 60 of the original members of the Seventy at some point. Many of them like Luke, Timothy, and Titus traveled with him a lot. In addition, Paul had some contact with Peter, John, Andrew and Philip.

Paul's work in Corinth had been very successful. John Chrysostom noted<sup>15</sup> that the Corinthians had many spiritual gifts, but yet they were carnal. They started well, but they were having problems growing up in that they were still like babies. Many holy men and women were there but there were some who had problems. Paul started off by reminding them of the grace of God.

A great question here arises. They who had been 'enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge' (1 Corinthians 1:5), so as in no respect to 'come short in any gift' (1 Corinthians 1:7), are they carnal? If they were such at the beginning, much more now. How then does he call them 'carnal?' He said, 'I could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ' (1 Corinthians 3:1). What must we say then? That having in the beginning believed, and obtained all gifts, (for indeed they sought them earnestly), they became remiss afterwards. Perhaps Paul was addressing just those who were amenable to his censures. As to the fact that they still had gifts; 'Each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification' (1 Corinthians 14:26). And, 'Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge' (1 Corinthians 14:29). We may state it somewhat differently; it is usual to call the greater part the whole, so also, he has spoken in this place. I think he hints at his own proceedings; for he too had shewn forth signs; as he said 'Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches?' (2 Corinthians 12:12-13)

He both reminds them of his own miracles and speaks thus with an eye to those who were still approved. Many holy men were there who had 'devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints', and had become 'the first fruits of Achaia' (1 Corinthians 16:15).

Paul begins his Epistle with what seem to be praises. I say, 'seem'; for this praise did not belong to them, but to the grace of God. They had remission of sins, and were justified; this was of the Gift from above. Therefore, he dwells on these points, which shew the loving-kindness of God, in order that he may the more fully purge out their sickness.

### **The Seventy as Messengers**

- In writing to the Corinthians, Paul had some major issues to deal with. Among them:
- Factions: Four rival groups competing (1:12ff)
  - Immorality: Incest worse than the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 5:1ff)
  - Quarrels: Virgins vs. Married (1 Corinthians 7:1ff)

---

<sup>14</sup> See Mark Kern, The Life of the Apostle Paul, St. Athanasius Press, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, II, 4-5.

- Food offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8:1ff)
  - Heresy: Heretics denying the resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12ff)
- Since communication and travel was much slower than today, Paul had to depend on messengers to tell him what was going on and to bring some words of correction and instruction back. Among these messengers were Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10, 11), Apollos (1 Corinthians 16:12), and Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:15-17). All of these except Stephanas were members of the Seventy (Luke 10:1-24). These messengers played the same role as the servants in the Gospel lesson whom the Lord sent to the vineyard to receive the fruits of it. These messengers greatly refreshed Paul's spirit and they greatly helped the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:18).

The use of messengers continued in later centuries. Athanasius of Alexandria used<sup>16</sup> many messengers to distribute his letters to his people while the Arian heretics were trying to hunt him down during his exiles. He even asked his people not to make copies of his letters so that they didn't fall into the wrong hands.

"I have written as well as I was able. You, dearly beloved, receive these communications not as containing a perfect exposition of the Godhead of the Word, but as being merely a refutation of the impiety of the enemies of Christ. They contain and afford to those who desire suggestions for arriving at a pious and sound faith in Christ. If in anything they are defective, pardon it with a pure conscience, and only receive favorably the boldness of my good intentions in support of godliness. For an utter condemnation of the heresy of the Arians, it is sufficient for you to know the judgment given by the Lord in the death of Arius<sup>17</sup>, of which you have already been informed by others. 'For what the Holy God has purposed, who shall frustrate? And who shall turn back his uplifted hand?' (Isaiah 14:27 LXX); and 'whom the Lord condemned, who shall justify?' (Romans 8:33-34). After seeing such a sign, who does not now acknowledge that the heresy is hated by God, however many men it has for its patrons? Now when you have read this account, pray for me, and exhort one another to do so. Immediately send it back to me, and allow no one whatever to take a copy of it, nor transcribe it for yourselves. But like good money-changers, be satisfied with the reading; but read it repeatedly if you desire to do so. It is not safe that our

<sup>16</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, Personal Letters, LII, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Socrates Scholasticus described the death of Arius as follows: "It was then Saturday, and Arius was expecting to assemble with the Church on the day following. But divine retribution overtook his daring criminalities. Going out of the imperial palace, attended by a crowd of Eusebian partisans like guards, he paraded proudly through the midst of the city, attracting the notice of all the people. As he approached the place called Constantine's Forum, where the column of porphyry is erected, a terror arising from the remorse of conscience seized Arius, and a violent relaxation of the bowels occurred. He therefore inquired where there was a latrine nearby; being directed to the back of Constantine's Forum, he hurried there. Soon faintness came over him, and together with the evacuations of his bowels, a copious hemorrhage followed, including the descent of the smaller intestines, with portions of his spleen and liver. There was such an effusion of blood that he almost immediately died a little before sunset. The scene of this catastrophe still is shown at Constantinople (i.e. 100 years after the event) behind the shambles in the colonnade. People going by point the finger at the place; there is a perpetual remembrance preserved of this extraordinary kind of death. So disastrous an occurrence filled the party of Eusebius with dread and alarm; and the report of it quickly spread over the city and throughout the whole world. Constantine grew more earnest in Christianity and confessed that the confession at Nicaea was attested by God; in this he rejoiced at the occurrences." Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, I, 38; II, 30.

writings and private persons should fall into the hands of those that shall come after. Greet one another in love, and also all that come to you in piety and faith. As Paul said, ‘If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. O Lord, come! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen’” (1 Corinthians 16:22-23).

### **Stand Fast in the Faith**

Paul said, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love” (1 Corinthians 16:13-14). What does it mean “to stand” and “to stand fast”?

In saying these things, Paul seems to be reprimanding them as being lazy<sup>18</sup>. He said, “Watch”, as though they were sleeping; he said “Stand”, as though they were rocking back and forth; he said, “Act like men, be strong”, as though they were cowardly; he said, “Let all that you do be done with love”, as though they had many dissensions.

John Chrysostom spoke<sup>19</sup> of what it means to stand fast in the Faith by comparing Christ’s Parable of the Sower with His Parable of the Tares in the Field. In the Parable of the Sower, some people threw away the seed; in the Parable of the Tares, the heretics tried to imitate the Faith with a worthless substitute, and this is where the faithful need to stand fast. The demons set aside the truth, bring in error, and paint many resemblances, so as to easily cheat the deceivable. This they do when men are sleeping and not being watchful. The demons always do this after Churches get established; unless they see what God has done, they wouldn’t know what to do. Then they imitate holy men with wicked men disguised as Church leaders. Christ calls them “an enemy”, but His answer is not to pull them out, since this may cause wars and slaughter. Instead He asks us first to be watchful, and second to wait for the proper season.

“The difference between the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23), and the parable of the tares in the field (Matthew 13:24-30) is as follows: In the parable of the sower, He speaks of those that have thrown away the seed; but in the parable of the tares, He means the societies of the heretics. In order that not even this might disturb His disciples, He foretells it also, after having taught them why He speaks in parables. The parable of the sower means not receiving Him; the parable of the tares means receiving corrupters instead. This also is a part of the demons’ craft, setting aside the truth, always bringing in error, painting many resemblances, so as to easily cheat the deceivable. Therefore, He calls it not another seed that was sown at night, but tares; which in appearance are somewhat like wheat.”

“Then He mentions also the manner of the demons’ device: ‘while men slept’ (Matthew 13:25). It is no small danger, which He hereby suspends over our rulers (in the Church), to whom especially is entrusted the keeping of the field; and not the rulers only, but the subjects too.”

“He points out that the error comes after the truth, which the actual events testify. For after the prophets, were the false prophets; and after the apostles, the false apostles; and after Christ, Antichrist. Unless the demons see what to imitate,

---

<sup>18</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLIV, 3.

<sup>19</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLVI, 1.

or against whom to plot, they neither attempt, nor know how. Having seen that 'one brought forth a hundredfold, another sixtyfold, another thirtyfold' (Matthew 13:23), the demons proceed after us another way. That is, not having been able to carry away what had taken root, nor to choke, nor to scorch it up, they conspire against it by another method, privately casting in his own inventions."

"What difference is there, one may ask, between those that sleep (Matthew 13:25), and those that resemble the wayside (Matthew 13:19)? In the case of the wayside the demons immediately snatch away the seed of the Kingdom; they didn't allow it even to take root; but with those that were sleeping more of his craft was needed."

"These things Christ said, instructing us to be always wakeful. Though we escape those harms, there is yet another harm. As in those instances 'the wayside', and 'the stony places', and 'the thorns', so here sleep occasions our ruin; so that there is need of continual watchfulness. Therefore, He said, 'He who endures to the end shall be saved'" (Matthew 10:22, 24:13).

"Something like this took place even at the beginning. Many of the prelates brought into the churches wicked men, disguised heresiarchs, gave great facility to the laying that kind of snare. The demons need not even take any trouble, when he has once planted them among us. 'How is it possible not to sleep?', one may say. As to natural sleep, it is not possible; but as to that of our moral faculty, it is possible. Therefore, Paul said, 'Watch, stand fast in the Faith'" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

"After this He points out the tares are superfluous too, not hurtful only; after the land has been tilled, and there is no need of anything, then this enemy sow again; as the heretics also do, who for no other cause than vainglory inject their proper venom."

"Not by this only, but by what follows likewise, He depicts exactly all their deeds. 'When the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared' (Matthew 13:26). This kind of thing the heretics also do. At the beginning, they disguise themselves; but when they have gained much confidence, and someone allows them to teach the word, then they pour out their poison. But why does He mention the servants of the owner, telling what has been done (Matthew 13:27)? That He may pronounce it wrong to slay them."

"Christ calls the demons 'an enemy' (Matthew 13:28), because of the harm done to men. Although their anger is against us, in its origin it sprang from their enmity, not to us, but to God. Thus, it is clear, that God loves us more than we love ourselves."

"Notice another thing also, the malicious craft of the demons. They did not sow before this, because they had nothing to destroy. But when all had been fulfilled (sown), that they might defeat the diligence of the Husbandman (Christ); in such enmity against Him did they constantly act."

"Note also the affection of the servants. They are in haste to root up the tares, even though they do it indiscreetly; which shows their anxiety for the crop, and that they are looking to one thing only, not to the punishment of that enemy, but to the preservation of the seed sown. Their concern is how they may for the present root out and destroy the mischief, this is their object. They don't seek this



absolutely, for they don't trust themselves with it, but await the Master's decision, saying, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' (Matthew 13:28). What then does the Master say? He forbids them, saying, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them' (Matthew 13:29). This He said, to hinder wars from arising, and blood and slaughter. It is not right to put a heretic to death, since an implacable war would be brought into the world. By these two reasons then He restrains them: one, that the wheat may not be hurt; two, that punishment will surely overtake them, if they are incurably diseased. Therefore, if you want them to be punished, yet without harm to the wheat, wait for the proper season."

"What does Christ mean by, 'Lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them' (Matthew 13:29)? There are two meanings: 'If you take up arms, and kill the heretics, many of the saints also will be overthrown with them'. Also 'of the very tares it is likely that many may change and become wheat'. If you root them up beforehand, you injure that which is to become wheat, slaying some, in whom there is yet room for change and improvement. He does not therefore forbid our checking heretics, stopping their mouths, taking away their freedom of speech, breaking up their assemblies and confederacies, but He only forbids our killing and slaying them."

"Standing" in a 1<sup>st</sup> century military sense requires a lot of training. We see an example of this when the Apostle Paul was being taken by night from Jerusalem to Caesarea (Acts 23:23). To guard Paul from ambush by the Jewish Zealots (Acts 23:12-21), the Chiliarch<sup>20</sup> arranged an escort composed of 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen. The 40 plus Jewish Zealots would have a difficult time overcoming the "stand" composed of 200 spearmen who were well-trained at "standing" using various thrusting moves with their spears.

John Chrysostom stated<sup>21</sup> that standing fast in the Faith also requires training and he compared this to the training of soldiers. "Standing" is one of the first tactics that soldiers learn, and it is important for Christians to learn this also, as Paul mentions. Having learned this tactic, the rest of the Christian life will be easier.

"Armaments are no use to a soldier, unless he was first posted in his own place, and unless the spirit of the soldier's soul was roused; for we must first arm him inside, and then outside. Now if this is the case with soldiers, much more is it with spiritual soldiers. Or rather in their case, there is no such thing as arming them outside, but everything is within. Paul has roused the fervor of the Ephesians, and set it on fire; he has added confidence. He has set them in due array. Observe how he puts on the armor. 'Stand therefore, having belted your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness' (Ephesians 6:14). The very first feature in tactics is to know how to stand well, and many things will depend upon that. As a result, Paul spoke much concerning standing, saying elsewhere, 'Watch, stand fast in the faith' (1 Corinthians 16:13). And again, 'so stand fast in the Lord, beloved' (Philippians 4:1). And again, 'Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall' (1 Corinthians 10:12). And again,

---

<sup>20</sup> A Chiliarch was a commander of 1000 troops and had 10 centurions, each with 100 soldiers, under his command.

<sup>21</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, vv. 13-14.

‘That you may be able, having done all, to stand’ (Ephesians 6:13). And again, ‘Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the Faith of the Gospel’ (Philippians 1:27). And again, ‘Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle’ (2 Thessalonians 2:15). And again, ‘For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord’ (1 Thessalonians 3:8). Doubtless then he does not mean merely any way of standing, but a correct way, and as many as have had experience in wars know how great a point it is to know how to stand. For if in the case of boxers and wrestlers, the trainer recommends this before anything else, namely, to stand firm, much more will it be the first thing in warfare, and military matters. The man who, in a true sense, stands, is upright; he doesn’t stand in a lazy attitude; he doesn’t lean on anything. Exact uprightness discovers itself by the way of standing, so that they who are perfectly upright, they stand. But they who do not stand, cannot be upright, but are unstrung and disjointed. The luxurious man does not stand upright, but is bent; so is the lewd man, and the lover of money. He who knows how to stand will from his very standing, as from a sort of foundation, find every part of the conflict easy for him.”

### **Respect for Other Christians**

Paul said, “I urge you, brethren -- you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints -- that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied.”

John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>22</sup> that mankind has not had a good record of finding the things of God because of our tendency toward haughtiness. As a result, God has not allowed men to be sufficient unto themselves, so as to restrain our haughtiness. This means that we all need to approach life with humility, and respect other believers around us.

“God said to Adam, ‘Do such a thing, and such another do not do’ (Genesis 2:16-17). Adam, as thinking to find out something more, disobeyed; and even what he had, he lost. God spoke to those that came after, ‘Rest not in the creature; but by means of the creature, contemplate the Creator’ (Romans 1:24-25). Mankind, as if making out something wiser than what had been commanded, set in motion windings innumerable. We kept dashing against ourselves and one another, and neither found God, nor concerning the creature had any distinct knowledge; nor had any meet and true opinion about it. Therefore again, with a very high hand, He lowered our conceit. He admitted the uneducated first (Acts 4:13), showing thereby that all men need the wisdom from above. Not only in the matter of knowledge, but also in all other things, both men and all other creatures He has constituted so as to be in great need of Him. We have this as a most forcible motive of attachment, lest turning away we should perish. Because of this, He did not allow us to be sufficient unto ourselves. Many now despise Him

---

<sup>22</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, V, 3.

in their ignorance and poverty; if we were sufficient unto ourselves, where would we not have wandered in haughtiness? By doing it this way, He restrained our boasting; this was not because He had a grudge against us, but to draw us away from the destruction that would ensue.”

### **The Example of Members of the Seventy Apostles<sup>23</sup>**

Paul said, “I urge you, brethren -- you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints -- that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, acknowledge such men. The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house” (1 Corinthians 16:15-19).

John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>24</sup> that these members of the Seventy Apostles were very important in Corinth, both in their faith and in their deeds. Paul asked everyone to submit to them that everyone might share in what they are doing.

“Paul didn’t say that they were the first who believed, but were the ‘first-fruits’; implying that together with their faith they showed forth also a most excellent life, in every way proving themselves worthy, as in the case of fruits. The first-fruits ought to be better than the rest of those things whereof they are the first-fruits: a kind of praise which Paul has attributed to these also by this expression. They not only had a genuine faith, but also, they exhibited great piety, the climax of virtue, and liberality in alms-giving. Paul indicates their piety from their having filled their whole house with godliness.”

“That they flourished in good works, Paul declares by what follows, saying, ‘They have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints’ (1 Corinthians 16:15). Notice how vast are the praises of their hospitality? For Paul did not say, ‘they minister’, but, ‘have devoted themselves’; this kind of life they have chosen altogether; this is their business in which they are always busy.”

“Paul continues, ‘That you also submit to such men’, that is, that you take a share with them both in expenditure of money, and in personal service; that you be partakers with them. For both to them the labor will be light when they have helpers, and the results of their active benevolence will extend to more.”

“Paul said not merely, ‘be fellow-helpers’, but added, ‘whatever directions they give, obey’; implying the strictest obedience. That he might not appear to be favoring them, he adds, ‘and to everyone who works and labors with us’. Let this, Paul said, be a general rule. I do not speak about them individually, but if there is anyone like them, let him also have the same advantages. Therefore, when he begins to commend, he calls upon themselves as witnesses, saying, ‘I urge you, brethren you know the household of Stephanas’. For you yourselves are aware, Paul said, how they labor, and have no need to learn from us.”

---

<sup>23</sup> For a summary of the lives of these Apostles, see Appendix A.

<sup>24</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLIV, 3.

The Epistle lesson is the conclusion to a long letter that covered many things. Paul summarizes this by reminding us that one of the messages we carry is the love of God and that we should do all things out of love (1 Corinthians 16:14) as he had mentioned earlier in the Epistle (1 Corinthians 13:1-13). John Chrysostom commented on this<sup>25</sup> to point out how love was missing in Corinth:

“For if love had not been neglected, they would not have been puffed up, they would not have said, ‘I am of Paul, and I of Apollos.’ If love had existed, they would not have gone to law before the heathen; or rather they would not have gone to law at all. If this had existed, that notorious person would not have taken his father’s wife; they would not have despised the weak brethren; there would have been no factions among them; they would not have been vain-glorious about their gifts. Therefore, it is that he says, ‘Let all things be done in love’”.

From there, Paul gives an example of love in the household of Stephanas. Paul had baptized Stephanas’ household (1 Corinthians 1:16) and referred to them as the first fruits of Achaia (1 Corinthians 16:15). Achaia was a large area and included Corinth and Athens. Epaenetus, another of the Seventy, was also mentioned as the first fruits of Achaia to Christ (Romans 16:5) in the Epistle to the Romans that was written perhaps a year later. If Stephanas’ household and Epaenetus were both first fruits of Achaia, then it may be that Epaenetus was part of Stephanas’ household, that this was a beginning monastic community, and that Fortunatus and Achaicus had joined them. They had “devoted themselves to the ministry (literally the Deaconate) of the saints” (1 Corinthians 16:15) in a church where remaining a virgin was strongly encouraged (1 Corinthians 7:1, 25-38). Paul had to write to tell them that it’s really okay to marry – as if some thought it was sinful (1 Corinthians 7:28).

In addition to using Stephanas’ household as an example of love and good works, Paul asked the Corinthians to submit to them and to others who work in the apostolic ministry with them. This is in contrast to the vinedressers in the Gospel lesson who beat, killed and stoned God’s messengers. Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, on the other hand, “refreshed Paul’s spirit and that of the Corinthians by supplying what was lacking on the part of the Corinthians” (1 Corinthians 16:17-18). Chrysostom stated<sup>26</sup> that “they had chosen to undertake so great a journey on behalf of the Corinthians” and that “they bore about in themselves the whole city”.

Paul also recalled old times by saying that “Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 16:19). Aquila and his wife Priscilla were some of the first people Paul met in Corinth when he founded the Church there about four years earlier (Acts 18:1-3). They also had been numbered with the Seventy and were well-known to the Corinthians. As Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, the Church was meeting in Aquila and Priscilla’s house in Ephesus. A year or so later, Paul wrote to the Church in Rome where the Church was meeting there in Aquila and Priscilla’s house also (Romans 16:3-5). They were sent to Rome with a number of others by Peter and Paul to help start the Church in Rome.

---

<sup>25</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLIV, 2.

<sup>26</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLIV, 3.

## The Kiss of Peace

To tie this together, Paul said to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (16:20). This is a reference to “the kiss of peace<sup>27</sup> that was used in all the ancient Liturgies of the Church just before and as part of the Holy Eucharist”.

Cyril of Jerusalem pointed out<sup>28</sup> that the Embrace of Peace was already well-established in the Church in his day (early 4<sup>th</sup> century). In fact, it was related to specific instructions from Christ, and the Embrace of Peace appears many times in Paul’s Epistles.

“When the Deacon cries out, ‘Receive one another; and let us kiss one another’, don’t think that this kiss is of the same character with those given in public by common friends. It is not such; this kiss blends souls one with another, and courts entire forgiveness for them. The kiss therefore is the sign that our souls are mingled together, and we need to banish all remembrance of wrongs. To this effect Christ said, ‘If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift’ (Matthew 5:23-24). The kiss therefore is reconciliation, and for this reason holy. This is what Paul means when he says<sup>29</sup>, ‘Greet one another with a holy kiss’ (1 Corinthians 16:20). This is what Peter refers to when he says, ‘Greet one another with a kiss of love’” (1 Peter 5:14).

John Chrysostom took a closer look at why Paul mentioned the “Kiss of Peace” at this time. It was because the Corinthians really needed it.

“Paul’s addition of the ‘holy kiss’ comes here because they had been widely at variance with one another on account of,

1. Their saying: ‘I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ’ (1 Corinthians 1:12);
2. ‘One being hungry, and another drunken’ (1 Corinthians 11:21);
3. Their having contentions, jealousies and suits (1 Corinthians 6:1-7).
4. From the gifts, there was much envying and great pride (1 Corinthians 12).

Having knit them together by his exhortation, Paul naturally asks them use the holy kiss also as a means of union; for this unites, and produces one body. This is holy, when free from deceit and hypocrisy.”

Thus, we are God’s messengers and we receive God’s messengers. God’s messengers are there for our benefit and we need to receive them as such. They will refresh our spirit and we need to acknowledge them (1 Corinthians 16:18). By doing so, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to be with us.

## Let Him Be Anathema

---

<sup>27</sup> Editor’s footnote to Chrysostom’s Homily XLIV on 1 Corinthians 16.

<sup>28</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XXIII, 3.

<sup>29</sup> See also Romans 16:16, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26.

Paul said, “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. Maranatha! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you” (1 Corinthians 16:22-23). What does this mean?

The English word “Anathema” is a transliteration of the Greek word *anathema*. The Greek word *anathema* in turn comes from the Hebrew word *cherem* meaning something devoted to the Lord. Some specific uses of the term anathema in the Old Testament are as follows:

- Anything a man devotes to the Lord is holy, is not redeemable and is called anathema (Leviticus 27:28).
- All the anathema that are devoted to the Lord in turn belongs to the priests (Numbers 18:14).
- The Canaanite king of Arad and his destroyed cities were named “Anathema” (Numbers 21:2-3).
- Bringing an idol into one’s house brought anathema onto the house (Deuteronomy 7:26, 13:15-17).
- Because Achan took some of the anathema to his home he became anathema also (Joshua 7, 22:20).
- Everything in Jericho except Rahab and her family were anathema (Joshua 6:17-26).
- Thus, the anathema was a kind of a vow, either initiated by an individual regarding some of his possessions or as a command by the Lord out of righteous judgment.

The term anathema is also used in the New Testament in a similar manner. Some examples are:

- Preaching any other gospel than that of the Apostles is anathema (Galatians 1:8-9).
- If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, he is anathema (1 Corinthians 16:22).
- No one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus anathema (1 Corinthians 12:3).
- Some Jews bound themselves under an anathema unless they killed Paul (Acts 23:12-21).
- Paul wished that he were anathema if only his fellow Jews could be saved (Romans 9:3).
- The Temple in Jerusalem was adorned with beautiful stones and anathema (Luke 21:5).
- The Church Fathers of the 4<sup>th</sup> century pronounced an anathema on all who subverted the Nicene Creed. Later the anathema was removed from the Nicene Creed to make it a positive statement of the Faith for use in the Church liturgy.

Gregory Thaumaturgus stated<sup>30</sup> that people in his day do the same thing that Achan did. They find a lost article and make no pretense of trying to find the rightful owner. Finders keepers! Achan did this against enemies, but people today do that against brethren.

“Behold, did not Achan transgress in the anathema, and trouble then came down on all the congregation of Israel (Joshua 7)? This one man was alone in his sin; but he was not alone in the death that came by his sin. Everything we have, which is ours not in our own rightful possession, but as property strictly belonging to others, ought to be reckoned a thing devoted. Achan indeed took of the spoil; and men of the present time also take of the spoil. Achan took what belonged to enemies; while we now take what belongs to brethren, and enrich ourselves with fatal gains. Let no one deceive himself, nor put forward the pretext of having found such property. It is not lawful, even for a man who has found anything, to enrich himself by it.”

Paul’s heart went out to the Jewish people. Like Moses (Exodus 32:32), Paul volunteered to be anathema from God for the sake of his fellow countrymen (Romans

---

<sup>30</sup> Gregory Thaumaturgus, Canonical Epistle 3-4.

9:3). Thus, he spoke of provoking them to jealousy by his ministry to the Gentiles, in hopes that some of them might be saved (Romans 11:13-15).

Paul said, 'I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh' (Romans 9:2-3). John Chrysostom expounded on<sup>31</sup> what Paul meant by this statement. Out of his exceedingly great love for his Israeli kinsmen, Paul said these words. But the word "anathema" has two meanings: it means something rejected, but it also means something devoted to God (and thus rejected from ordinary use by others). Paul referred to this latter meaning, and we admire him for this.

"What are you saying Paul? From Christ, your beloved One, from Whom neither kingdom, hell, things visible, intelligible, nor another world as great, would separate you? Is it from Him that you would now be anathema? What has happened? Have you changed; have you given over that love? No, he replies! Rather I have even made it more intense. How then is it that you would be anathema, and seek a separation to such a distance, that after it there is no possibility of finding a more distant one? Because I love Him exceedingly, Paul may reply. How, and in what manner? These things seem like a riddle. Rather, let us learn what the curse is, and then we will question him on these points, and we shall understand this unspeakable and extraordinary love. Listen to Paul's own words, 'If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema' (1 Corinthians 16:22). That is, let him be set apart from all, removed from everyone. For as in the case of a thing dedicated (anathema), which is set apart for God, no one would venture so much as to touch it with his hand or even to come near it. So too with a man who is put apart from the Church, in cutting him off from everyone and removing him as far off as possible, he calls him by this name (anathema) in the opposite sense, with much fear instructing all men to keep apart from him. The thing set apart, no one, from respect of it, ventures to come near. But from him who is cut off, all men separate themselves from an opposite feeling. The separation is the same, and both the one and the other are equally removed from everyone. But the mode of separation is not the same; they are opposites. From the one they keep back as being dedicated to God; from the other as being estranged from God, and broken off from the Church. This then is what Paul means when he says, 'I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ' (Romans 9:3). But if what he says trouble you in your feebleness, consider the real state of the case, not only that he wished to be separated, but also the cause for which he wished it, and then you will see the greatness of his love. For he even circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3), and we pay no attention to what was done, but to the intention of it, and hence we wonder at him the more. He not only circumcised a person, but he even shaved his head and sacrificed (Acts 18:18; 21:23-24), and yet surely, we do not therefore say that he is a Jew. Instead, from what he did we say he is perfectly free from Judaizing, and a genuine worshipper of Christ. When you see him circumcising and sacrificing, you do not therefore condemn him as Judaizing, but crown him as quite an alien to Judaism. Thus,

---

<sup>31</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XVI, vv. 2-5.

when we see him desirous of being anathema, do not therefore be troubled, but give him the loudest praise, when you know the cause why he wishes this.”

“In those days, everyone was accusing God; they had been counted worthy of the name of sons, received the Law, knew Him beyond all men, enjoyed such great glory, served him beyond the whole world, and received the promises. They were from fathers who were friends of God, and what was the greatest thing of all, they were forefathers of Christ Himself, for this is the meaning of the words, ‘of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came’ (Romans 9:5). But they are now cast out and disgraced. In their place are introduced men who had never known Him, of the Gentiles. Now since they said all this, and blasphemed God, Paul hearing it, and being cut to the heart, and vexed for God’s glory’s sake, wished that he were anathema, had it been possible. Paul wanted them to be saved, and this blasphemy put to a stop, that God might not seem to have deceived the offspring of those to whom He promised the gifts. It was in sorrow for this that Paul spoke, that the promise of God might not seem to fall to the ground, which said to Abraham, ‘I will give this land to your descendants and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed’” (Genesis 26:4).

John Chrysostom said<sup>32</sup> that Christ on the Cross also endured the death of the anathema. And Christ called His Cross “His glory”, where He will glorify His Father by doing this. As Christ was about to be crucified with thieves and grave-robbers, spit on and punched; He did this for His beloved ones, which is us! Similarly, the Apostle Paul treated his chains the same way. Chrysostom compared Paul’s many miracles with Paul’s chains, and he called Paul’s chains more blessed, just like Christ called us blessed when we are reviled and persecuted for His sake.

“Paul said, ‘I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love’ (Ephesians 4:1-2). I deem it more desirable to suffer evil for Christ’s sake, than to receive honor at Christ’s hands. This is transcendent honor, this is glory that surpasses all things. If He Himself who became a servant for my sake, and ‘emptied’ His glory (Philippians 2:7), yet thought not Himself so truly in glory, as when He was crucified for my sake, what ought I not endure? Listen to Christ’s own words: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You’ (John 17:1). What is this He is saying? He is being led to the cross with thieves and grave-robbers; He is enduring the death of the anathema; He is about to be spit on and punched; and He calls this glory? Yes, He said, for I suffer these things for My beloved ones, and I count these things altogether glory. He who loved the miserable and wretched calls this glory: not to be on His Father’s throne, nor in His Father’s glory, but in dishonor. If this was His glory, and if this He set before the other: much more ought I to regard these things as glory. Those blessed bonds! Those blessed hands which that chain adorned! Not so worthy were Paul’s hands when they lifted up and raised the lame man at Lystra (Acts 14:8-12), as when Paul’s hands were bound with those chains (Acts 26:29; Ephesians 6:20). Had I been living in those times; how eagerly would I have

---

<sup>32</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VIII, vv. 1-2.



embraced them. Don't you marvel at Paul, when the viper fastened on his hand, and did him no harm? (Acts 28:3-6). Don't marvel; the viper revered his chain. The whole Mediterranean Sea revered it; for then too was he bound, when he was saved from shipwreck (Acts 27). Were anyone to grant me power to raise the dead at this moment, I would not choose that power, but this chain. If I were free from the cares of the Church; if my body was strong and vigorous, I would not shrink from undertaking so long a journey, only for the sake of beholding those chains, for the sake of seeing the prison where he was bound. The traces indeed of his miracles are numerous in all parts of the world, yet are they not so dear as those of his scars (Galatians 6:17). Nor in the Scriptures does Paul so delight me when he is working miracles, as when he is suffering evil, being scourged, and dragged about. From his body were carried away handkerchiefs and aprons to heal the sick (Acts 19:12). Marvelous, truly marvelous, are these things, and yet not so marvelous as: 'When they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison' (Acts 16:23). Again, being in bonds, 'at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them' (Acts 16:25). And again, "They stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead' (Acts 14:19). Do you know how mighty a thing an iron chain is for Christ's sake, bound about His servant's body? Listen to what Christ Himself said, 'Blessed are you'. For what? When you shall raise the dead? No. But why? When you shall heal the blind? Not at all. But why then? 'When they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake' (Matthew 5:11). Now, if to be evil spoken of renders men thus blessed, to be treated as evil, what may not that achieve? Listen to what Paul said elsewhere: 'Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day' (2 Timothy 4:8). More glorious than this crown is the chain. Let Him but grant me to say, that 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church' (Colossians 1:24), and I ask nothing further.

John Chrysostom further spoke about<sup>33</sup> how Christ died as the anathema. The Jewish leaders consciously did it that way so He would appear utterly abominable between two thieves. Those present at the Cross realized they had been part of a great sin when they left beating their breasts in shame (Luke 23:48). Even the thieves reviled Him, until the one repented. As a result, God has highly exalted Christ.

"Truly it is a great and unspeakable thing, that Christ became a servant; that He underwent death is far greater. But there is something still greater, and stranger; why? All deaths are not alike; His death was planned to be the most ignominious of all, to be full of shame, to be anathema; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13). For this cause the Jews eagerly desired to slay Him in this manner, to make Him a reproach, that if no one fell away from Him by reason of His death, yet they might from the manner of His death. For this reason, two robbers were crucified with Him, and He in the midst, that He might share their ill repute, and that the

---

<sup>33</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philipians, VII, vv. 7-8.

Scripture might be fulfilled, ‘He was numbered with the transgressors’ (Isaiah 53:12). Yet so much the more does truth shine forth, so much the more does it become bright; for when His enemies plot such things against His glory, and it yet shines forth, so much the greater does the matter seem. Not by slaying Him, but by slaying Him in such sort did they think to make Him abominable, to prove Him more abominable than all men, but they accomplished nothing. Both the robbers also were such impious ones (for it was afterward that the one repented), that, even when on the cross, they reviled Him. Neither the consciousness of their own sins, nor their present punishment, nor their suffering the same things themselves, restrained their madness. Therefore, the one spoke to the other, and silenced him by saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?’ (Luke 23:40). So great was their wickedness! Therefore, it is written, ‘Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name’” (Philippians 2:9).

As a word of warning, however, Paul said, “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema” (1 Corinthians 16:22). Chrysostom’s comment<sup>34</sup> on this is:

“By this one word he strikes fear into all: those who made their members the members of a harlot; those who put stumbling blocks in the way of their brethren by the things offered in sacrifice to idols; and those who refuse to believe the resurrection. He not only strikes fear, but also points out the way of virtue and the fountain of vice. Namely, when our love towards Him has become intense, there is no kind of sin that is not extinguished and cast out thereby; so, when it is too weak it causes all kinds of sin to spring up”.

Similarly, Jesus pitied Jerusalem, being well aware of what was about to happen, and that it would have to endure all misery because of its crimes against Him. He went up from Judea to Jerusalem, and, when He beheld the city, He wept over it, and said, ‘Would that you had known the things of your peace; but now they are hidden from your eyes’ (Luke 19:41-42). As He wept over Lazarus (John 11:35), in pity for the whole race of mankind, so we say that He was grieved<sup>35</sup> at seeing Jerusalem involved in extreme miseries for which there was no cure.

## **Maranatha**

Paul concluded his Epistle with the words, “Maranatha! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you” (1 Corinthians 16:22-23). What does “Maranatha” mean?

---

<sup>34</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLIV, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Moses and the Apostle Paul felt this same grief and both offered to be accursed from Christ themselves in order that their countrymen might be saved (Exodus 32:32, Romans 9:3).

“Maranatha” is a Hebrew (Aramaic) word. It is used either as “Marana Tha” or as “Maran Atha” and was used in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Hebrew Liturgy at the Eucharist meaning “Our Lord is present” (1 Corinthians 16:22). It was also used to refer to the Second Coming of Christ, meaning “Our Lord is coming”. The Apostle John translates it into Greek as he concludes the prophecy in Revelation (Revelation 22:20).

Why would Paul use a Hebrew word at the conclusion of a Greek Epistle to a Church that did not speak Hebrew? This is the only place that the word “Maranatha” appears in the New Testament. John Chrysostom stated that this was Paul’s way of saying that the Corinthians should consider all that the Lord had done for them, and that they should order their lives accordingly.

“For what reason is this word used? And why in the Hebrew-tongue? The arrogance of the Corinthians was the cause of all the evils, and the wisdom of the world produced this arrogance; the sum and substance of all the evils especially distracted the Church in Corinth. In repressing their arrogance Paul did not even use the Greek tongue, but the Hebrew: signifying that so far from being ashamed of that sort of simplicity, he even embraces it with much warmth.”

“But what is the meaning of ‘Maran atha?’ ‘Our Lord is come’. For what reason then does Paul use this phrase in particular? To confirm the doctrine of the Economy: out of which class of topics more than any other he has put together those arguments which are the seeds of the Resurrection. Not only this, but also to rebuke them; as if he had said, ‘The common Lord of all has condescended to come down, and are you in the same state, and do you remain in your sins? Aren’t you thrilled with the excess of His love, the crown of His blessings? Consider just this one thing, and it will suffice for progress in all virtue, and you will be able to extinguish all sin’”.

Paul concluded his Epistle with the words: “My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen” (1 Corinthians 16:24). John Chrysostom noted<sup>36</sup> that it is one thing to correct someone out of anger; but Paul was not doing that at all. Paul was showing great compassion and love to the Corinthians.

“Paul corrected the Corinthians by throwing himself into their arms, for he that corrects ought to do this; he who acts merely from anger is but satisfying his own feeling. But he who after correcting the sinner also shows great love, shows that those words, that he spoke in reproof, were words of fond affection. Let us also chasten one another; and let neither the corrector be angry, (for this belongs not to correction, but to passion,) nor let him that is corrected take it in a bad way. What is done is healing, not injury. Now physicians use surgery and no one finds fault with them, even when they do it frequently, even when they miss their object. Even in their pain the subjects of the surgery see the physicians as benefactors even when they excite this pain. Much more ought he who receives reproof to be so disposed, and as to a physician so to pay attention to the corrector, and not as to an enemy. Let us also who rebuke approach with great gentleness, with great prudence. If we see a brother committing sin, as Christ commanded, let us not make our rebuke public, but ‘between us and him alone’

---

<sup>36</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLIV, 5.

(Matthew 18:15) not reproaching nor insulting over him when down, but in pain and with a melting heart. And let us show ourselves ready to receive reproof, if we commit error in anything.”

## Appendix A Biography of the Seventy Apostles Mentioned

**Achaicus:** Achaicus was not one of the original Seventy Apostles, but some say he was added to the ranks of the Seventy later<sup>37</sup>. Prior to Paul writing his second letter to Corinth, Fortunatus and Achaicus along with Deacon Stephanas brought a letter from Corinth to Paul which is now lost (1 Corinthians 16:15-17). Paul then answered this letter in his second letter (i.e. the one we know as 1 Corinthians). These three men probably returned to Corinth after delivering the letter. Achaicus is not recorded as serving as Bishop at any city.

**Aquila and Priscilla:** Aquila was not one of the original Seventy Apostles<sup>38</sup>, but was added to the ranks of the Seventy later. Paul first met Aquila and Priscilla<sup>39</sup> in Corinth on his 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey. Aquila and Priscilla had been expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius along with all the Jews in Rome (Acts 18:2). Aquila was a tent-maker like Paul, so Paul stayed with them for the year-and-a-half that he was in Corinth. When Paul left Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla traveled with him, and Paul left them in Ephesus to teach the new Christians while he went back to Antioch. On Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey, they were still there, and Paul sent them on ahead to Rome before he wrote his Epistle to the Romans in c. 55 AD. At that time, Claudius had died and Nero was then Emperor. In Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19) as in Rome (Romans 16:3-5), the Church met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla.

Aquila and Priscilla were not in Rome in 62 AD (Colossians 4:7-18) when Paul was under house-arrest there, and they were in Ephesus in c. 66 AD working with Timothy (2 Timothy 4:19) in his battle against others of the Seventy Apostles who had apostatized.

**Fortunatus:** Fortunatus was not one of the original Seventy Apostles<sup>40</sup>, but may have been added to the ranks of the Seventy later<sup>41</sup>. He carried<sup>42</sup> a letter to Paul from Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:15-17) along with Paul's reply, which we know as "1 Corinthians". He was later beheaded for the Faith.

---

<sup>37</sup> See <https://www.stathanasius.org/resources/e-books/>, Mark Kern, *The Life of the Apostle Paul*, St Athanasius Press, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.stathanasius.org/resources/e-books/>, Mark Kern, *The Life of the Apostle Paul*, St Athanasius Press, 2014

<sup>39</sup> *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, translated and published by Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista CO, 2008, July 14; 2004, February 13; 2003, January 4. Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 14. <http://oca.org/FSlives.asp> for July 14.

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.stathanasius.org/resources/e-books/>, Mark Kern, *The Life of the Apostle Paul*, St Athanasius Press, 2014

<sup>41</sup> *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, translated and published by Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista CO, 2003, January 4. <http://oca.org/FSlives.asp> for January 4.

Fortunatus is not listed as one of the Seventy by:

Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986.

Hippolytus, "On the Seventy Apostles", *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, v. 5.

<sup>42</sup> For more details, see the section titled "Paul's Epistles to Corinth".

**Stephanas:** Stephanas was not one of the original Seventy Apostles<sup>43</sup>, and no one mentions him as being added to the ranks of the Seventy later. No details of his life are available, except that he died in peace<sup>44</sup>.

---

<sup>43</sup> See <https://www.stathanasius.org/resources/e-books/>, Mark Kern, The Life of the Apostle Paul, St Athanasius Press, 2014

<sup>44</sup> The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, translated and published by Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista CO, 2005, June 15.

# THE CALLING OF THE TWELVE

September 22, 2024  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Luke  
Revision F

**Gospel: Luke 5:1-11**

In the West, today's Gospel lesson is used either on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost or the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. In the Eastern lectionary, today's Gospel lesson from Matthew 4 is used also for the Second Sunday after Pentecost.

This Sunday's Gospel is about the calling of four of the Twelve and concludes with them leaving everything to follow the Lord. To understand some of the details, we need to understand what fishing was like on the Sea of Galilee and also what it meant for them to leave everything.

## Table of Contents

Background: The Life of Jesus and the Twelve.....	1099
Background: Fishing in the Sea of Galilee.....	1099
Types of Fish Present.....	1100
Fishing Methods.....	1101
Gospel: Luke 5:1-11, Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20.....	1102
Implications of the Miracle of the Fish.....	1102
The Humility of the Apostles.....	1104

## Background: The Life of Jesus and the Twelve

This was not the first contact Jesus ever made with Peter, Andrew, James and John. James and John were Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins and had known Him since they were children. Many of the Twelve were with Jesus at the wedding feast at Cana, which occurred just before Passover earlier in the year, which was 27 AD (John 2). They were there when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the One he came to announce (John 3). At that time, Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John, where Jesus' disciples actually did the baptizing (John 4:2). Prior to that, some of the Twelve had been disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:36-37). They had recently traveled with Jesus back and forth from Galilee and were there with the Samaritan woman by the well in Sychar (John 4). The reading from Luke 5 is set late in the year 27, the first year of Jesus' public ministry, which began just before Passover at Cana. The Twelve were not necessarily full-time disciples yet. They were still working at their trade, perhaps to earn enough that they could travel with Jesus part-time. After they made their decisions to follow Jesus full-time, some of the Holy Women pitched in to help support them (Luke 8:2-3).

## **Background: Fishing in the Sea of Galilee**

Fishing on the Sea of Galilee changed very little between the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. By the 1950's, synthetic fiber nets replaced cotton and linen, motors replaced oars and sails and electronic fish-finders came into use. Not surprisingly, fish hauls increased and indigenous species began to be depleted; new species were introduced.

### **Types of Fish Present**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, four species of fish were common. The first was a catfish, which was of no economic importance because it was "unclean". From Leviticus 11:9-12, seafood must have fins and scales to be kosher; catfish have no scales.

The second species was the sardine and represented about half the yearly tonnage taken from the lake. In the story of the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:9-10) and of the 4,000 (Matthew 15:34-38) the fish that were multiplied were sardines. The city of Magdala on the Western shore of the Sea of Galilee was the center of the sardine pickling industry in the region.

A third species of fish was the barbel, a member of the carp family. The largest of the barbels, the Long-headed Barbel, is a nice looking fish resembling a trout that feeds on small fish and mollusks. The barbel can reach 30 inches in length and can weigh 15 pounds.

The fourth species of fish is called the musht today (meaning "comb" in Arabic) and has a long dorsal fin resembling a comb. The musht feed on plankton and congregate in shoals, especially as cold weather approaches. Since the musht is the only large fish found in shoals, this has to be the species involved in several New Testament accounts. The musht can reach 18 inches in length and can weigh 5 pounds.

The musht is a flat white fish and is often prepared by frying (compare John 21:9). The skeleton consists of an easily detached backbone and relatively few small bones, thus making it easy to eat. Since it is one of the tastiest fish in the lake, it has been called St. Peter's fish from an account in Matthew 17:24-27. Peter paid the Temple tax for Jesus by catching a fish (with a baited hook) and taking a coin from the fish's mouth.

There are two different opinions on why a fish might have a shekel coin in its mouth. Gower stated<sup>45</sup> that the fish involved was the tilapa, also called the musht today. Tilapa carry their eggs and later the young fish in their mouths. Even when they go in search of food for themselves, the young still return to the protection of the mother's mouth. When the mother fish wishes to keep them out, she will pick up an object (a bright one, preferably) and keep it in her mouth to prevent their return. In this case, Gower suggested that the fish had picked up a shekel coin.

However, Peter caught the fish with a baited hook; musht eat plankton and wouldn't respond to bait. Mendel Nun therefore suggested<sup>46</sup> that Peter must have caught a barbel, which is a trout-like fish that would respond to a baited hook. Local traditions, he said, later applied the

<sup>45</sup> Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, p. 131, Chicago, 1998.

<sup>46</sup> Mendel Nun, "Cast Your Net Upon the Waters", Biblical Archaeology Review, Nov./Dec. 1993, pp. 46-56.



name “St. Peter’s fish” to the more popular eating fish. Nun doesn’t mention what a barbel would be doing with a coin in its mouth. This miracle was so great that it would be a small extra feature if it were a musht that responded to Peter’s hook.

### **Fishing Methods**

Three types of nets were referred to in both New and Old Testaments. These types of nets have been used for thousands of years and require much different techniques.

The first type, a dragnet (Greek *sagaynay*), is the oldest type and is shown in Figure 1. Typical dragnets or seines were up to 1,000 feet long and 25 feet high. It was spread out by boat 100 yards or more from shore and then hauled to shore by a team of 16 men. Sinkers kept the bottom of the net down and floats kept the top on the surface. When the net reached the shore, the fish were sorted and the catfish were thrown away. This is the type of net referred to in Matthew 13:47-50. This net couldn’t be used if the shoreline was rocky or had kelp growing near the shore.

A second type of net is a cast net or bag net (Greek *amphilblestron*) and is shown in Figure 2. This type is circular, about 25 feet in diameter and has lead weights all around the outer edge. After the net is thrown and sinks to the bottom, it is either retrieved by a system of cords or by a diver. When Peter and Andrew were called (Matthew 4:18), they were using this net, perhaps catching sardines. When Peter and Andrew left their nets (Matthew 4:20), they left the third type of net: their trammel nets.

A third type of net is called a trammel net (Greek *diktuon*). This type of net has three layers as shown in Figure 3 and was used only at night. It was not useful during the day because the fish could see the weaving and avoid it. Modern synthetic fiber, which is invisible under water, has made trammel nets useful today in the daytime. The trammel net was spread in a crescent shape roughly parallel to the shoreline. The boat that laid the net then quietly maneuvered toward shore between the net and the shore. All of a sudden the fishermen in the boat started making racket by beating the water with oars or stamping on the bottom of the boat. The frightened fish headed for deep water — right into the net and became entangled.

The trammel net was lowered and hauled up perhaps a dozen times during the night. Early in the morning the net was washed, repaired and hung up to dry, thus preparing for the next night’s work.

A variation of the trammel net usage is called the veranda method<sup>47</sup> and is used during the daytime.

### **Gospel: Luke 5:1-11, Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20**

#### **Implications of the Miracle of the Fish**

The type of net referred to in Luke 5 is the trammel net. Peter, Andrew, James and John had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. Jesus arrived early in the morning while they were finishing up using bag nets (Matthew 4:18) and He taught from Peter’s boat for a while.

<sup>47</sup> For more information, see [Biblical Archaeology Review](#), Nov./Dec. 1993, pp. 46-56.

After Jesus stopped teaching, He said to Peter, “Launch out to deep water and let down the (trammel) nets” which had already been washed and hung up to dry. Peter protested that this was pointless: the nets weren’t useful in deep water, or in the daytime and this would require re-washing the nets; but he did so anyway. Having done so, Peter encountered such a catch that (1) the net started to break, (2) the boat almost sank due to the weight of the catch, and (3) Peter had to call James and John over to help, and filled both boats. The Gospel lesson account was especially remarkable because the fish can see the nets during the daytime and can easily escape entanglement.

Comparing a similar catch they encountered under similar circumstances following the Resurrection, they caught 153 large fish (John 21:1-12). These fish from John 21:11 were probably the musht since they were caught near shore (100 yards out); the haul was then around 600 pounds of fish, figuring an average of four pounds each.

Since the catch in our Gospel lesson was taken in deep water (Luke 5:4), it was probably a school of large barbel. In John 21, the 153 fish are referred to as “a multitude of fish” (Luke 5:6) and “full of large fish” (Luke 5:11). The quantity of the catch is referred to as “a great number of fish” (Luke 5:6). The net did not break in John 21 (although the catch was large) but the net did start breaking in Luke 5. If there were also around 150 fish in the Luke 5 catch, this would represent about a ton of fish, figuring 10-15 pounds per barbel. To get a better idea of the quantity of fish, these boats were the same ones that the Twelve rowed across the Sea of Galilee during a storm in Mark 4:36-38. In order to work at night to lay nets that are hundreds of feet long, the boat was a larger-than-average rowboat. There was probably room for at least six adults plus space for Jesus to sleep. This means that the boat could probably carry over 1,000 pounds of fish plus two crewmembers. Since both boats were filled to the point of almost sinking (Luke 5:7) this represented quite a haul! Especially since a good night’s catch (working all night, letting down the nets 12-15 times) was only about 200 pounds.

Peter, Andrew, James, John and the rest of the crew were understandably astonished at the size of the catch especially coming in the daytime. Peter’s remark “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!” is reminiscent of that of Isaiah after having seen the Lord in His temple (Isaiah 6:1-7). Many times, the closer we get to the Lord, the more we realize our own sinfulness. From the Lord’s reply, “Do not be afraid”, there was more than just simple surprise but some fear and trembling also at the magnitude of the Lord’s miracle. One might note Peter’s progression over the course of the Gospel lesson from calling Jesus “Master” (Luke 5:5) to calling Him “Lord” (Luke 5:8).

Some of the Twelve had been called earlier, but as disciples, not as Apostles. From the Gospel account, they wouldn’t just go out into deep water and let down their nets for a stranger, especially being tired after fishing all night and just having finished cleaning their nets. We get some insight into the earlier calling of these same four Apostles by Jesus (John 1:43-51), where they were still part-time fishermen at that time. After the calling of today’s Gospel lesson, they left everything (Luke 5:11) and were soon sent out by themselves to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-10). The earlier calling (John 1:43-51) is used in the Eastern lectionary for the First Sunday in Lent and focuses on the calling of Nathanael. The

calling of the rest of the Twelve Apostles took place shortly after today's Gospel lesson where the Lord put His team all together (Luke 6:12-16).

Tertullian pointed out<sup>48</sup> that the Prophet Jeremiah had predicted the calling of the fishermen as Apostles. When the fishermen left their nets, they understood that this was what Jeremiah had predicted.

“Out of so many kinds of occupations, why did Christ have such respect for that of fishermen, as to select from it for Apostles Simon, his brother and the sons of Zebedee? For this account was not written down just to bring out Peter's trembling at the very large catch of fish, where the Lord's response was, ‘Do not be afraid! From now on you will catch men’ (Luke 5:10). By saying this, He suggested to them the meaning of the prophecy, that it was He who by Jeremiah had foretold, ‘Behold, I will send many fishermen; and they shall fish them’ (Jeremiah 16:16), that is, men. When they left their boats and followed Him, they understood that it was He who had begun to accomplish what He had declared by Jeremiah”.

Cyril of Alexandria stated<sup>49</sup> that Christ caught the disciples as fish in His net as He showed how creation serves His commands. This miracle underscored what He had been just been teaching the crowds. Many others have done this same thing since then, where Christ fills the net with those who live in the surge and waves of worldly things.

“Notice that Christ not only preaches, but also displays signs, giving pledges of His power, and confirming His words by the display of miracles. After He had sufficiently conversed with the multitudes, He returned to His usual mighty works. By means of their pursuits as fishermen, He catches the disciples as fish. Thus, men might know that His Will is Almighty, and that the creation serves His Most Godlike commands. Since He had not taught them sufficiently, it was fitting to add some Divine work to His words for the benefit of the spectators. He asked Simon and his companions to push off from the land and let down their nets for a catch. They replied that that they had been laboring all night and had caught nothing; however, in the Name of Christ, they let down the net. Immediately, it was full of fish! By a visible fact, and by a type and representation, miraculously enacted, they might be fully convinced that their labor would not be unrewarded, nor the zeal fruitless which they displayed in spreading out the net of the Gospel teaching. Most certainly they should catch within it the shoals of the heathen. But notice this: neither Simon nor his companions could draw the net to land; they were speechless from fright and astonishment – for their wonder had made them mute. They therefore beckoned to their partners who shared their labors in fishing to come and help them in securing their prey. For many have taken part with the holy Apostles in their labors, and still do so, especially such as search into the meaning of what is written in the holy Gospels. Others besides them, even the pastors, teachers and rulers of the people, who are skilled in the doctrines of truth. Still today the net is drawn, while Christ fills it, and summons to conversion those in the depths of the

<sup>48</sup> Tertullian, The Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 105.

sea, according to the Scripture phrase; those that is, who live in the surge and waves of worldly things.”

### **The Humility of the Apostles**

The beginning of the work of the Twelve Apostles was characterized by a deep humility and awe at what the Master could do. This kind of humility was also characteristic throughout the Early Church where people did good works without seeking credit for it. John Chrysostom described<sup>50</sup> Peter’s humble words, “Depart from me” (Luke 5:8), as the foundation of a blessed walk with God. As we apply this attitude to all aspects of our life and work, we will find ourselves praised by God and man.

“Let us beware of saying anything about ourselves, for this renders us both odious with men and abominable to God. For this reason, the greater the good works we do, the less let us say of ourselves; this being the way to reap the greatest praise both with men and with God. Demand not a reward that you may receive a reward. Confess yourself to be saved by grace, that He may profess Himself a debtor to you; and not for your good works only, but also for such rightness of mind”.

“For when we do good works, we have Him debtor not for our good works only; but when we do not think we have done any good work, then this disposition itself is equivalent to good works. For should this be absent, good works will not appear great! In the same way, when we have servants (Luke 17:10), we should most approve them when, after having performed all their service with good will, they do not think they have done anything great. It was in this way that the centurion said, ‘I am not fit that you should enter under my roof’; because of this, he became worthy, and was ‘marveled at’ above all Jews (Matthew 8:8-10). In the same manner, Paul said, ‘I am the least of the apostles’ (1 Corinthians 15:9); because of this he came to be regarded first of all. So likewise, John the Baptist: ‘I am not fit to loosen the latchet of His shoe’ (Mark 1:7). Because of this he was the ‘friend of the Bridegroom’ (John 3:29), and the hand which he affirmed to be unworthy to touch His shoes, this did Christ draw onto His own head<sup>51</sup>. So Peter said, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man’ (Luke 5:8); because of this he became a foundation of the Church”.

“For nothing is so acceptable to God as to number one’s self with the last. This is a first principle of all practical wisdom. For he that is humbled, and bruised in heart, will not be vainglorious, wrathful, envious of his neighbor, and will not harbor any other passion. For if a man, by mourning for things pertaining to this life, drives out all the diseases of his soul, much more will he, who mourns for sins, enjoy the blessing of self-restraint”.

John Chrysostom also stated<sup>52</sup> that our life is like living in a foreign country, where the Lord’s Presence is our real home. If someone were to repay us a debt, it would be better for us to receive it at home, not away from home. Yet even in this life we will receive a hundred-fold. The Apostles gave up everything, and the result was that the world opened their homes to them.

<sup>50</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Alluding to the laying on of hands at Jesus’ baptism from Matthew 3:14-15.

<sup>52</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, VII, v. 31.

“If anyone were to owe you gold, while you were staying in a foreign country, and you had neither servants, nor any means to convey it across to the place of your abode, if he were to promise to pay you the loan, you would ask him to have it paid down not in the foreign land, but at home. In the same fashion, do you think it would be right to receive those spiritual and unutterable things in this world? This would be madness! For if you received them here, you would have them corruptible certainly; but if you wait for that time, He will repay you them incorruptible. If you receive here, you get lead; but if you get them there, it would be refined gold. Still He does not deprive you of the goods of this life. For along with that promise He has placed another also, to the following effect. Everyone that loves the things of the world to come, shall receive ‘a hundred-fold in this life present, and shall inherit eternal life’ (Matthew 19:29). If then we do not receive the hundred-fold, it is ourselves that are to blame for not lending to Him, Who can give so much; for all who have given have received much, even though they gave but little. For what great thing did Peter give? A broken net (Luke 5:6, 11), and a rod and a hook only! Yet still God opened to him the houses of the world, and spread before him land and sea, and all men invited him to their home. Or rather they sold what was their own, and brought it to the Apostles’ feet, not so much as putting it into their hands, so great was the honor they paid him”.

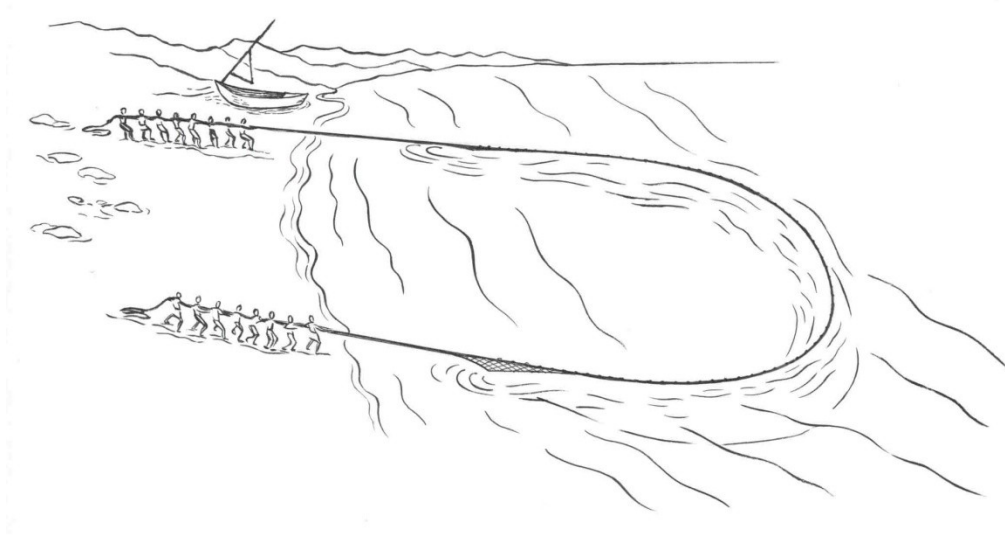
The significance of the Twelve Apostles is brought out by the question the Twelve asked Jesus: “What shall they have after having left all to follow him?” (Matthew 19:27) Jesus replied that they “will sit on twelve thrones judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

When Jesus first called the four Apostles (John 1:42), He prophesied that Peter would be called Cephas, meaning a rock or stone. Cephas is a name that comes from the Chaldean word “*kafē*” meaning rock; “*petra*” is the Greek counterpart meaning a large rock.

A little over a year after the four were called, following the death of John the Baptist, Jesus made His famous statement about the Church and how the Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). This was in response to Peter’s confession (Matthew 16:17), which is the “rock” that Jesus had spoken of earlier. Jesus went on to say that He would give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Twelve. Whatever they bind on earth shall be, having been bound in heaven. And whatever they loose on earth shall be, having been loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). The Twelve, who have established the foundation of the Church (Revelation 21:14) with Christ as the Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20), have already begun to judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel and have been doing so now for almost two millennia. The Church today is responsible before God to maintain the connection with the Twelve and the Cornerstone in order that this just judgment may continue for our benefit<sup>53</sup>. In doing this, the Church helps us to focus on loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength, and our neighbor as our self. And by doing that, we will obtain a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ as we pray in the various services.

<sup>53</sup> This theme occurs again in mid-July when the Orthodox lectionary remembers the Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils.

**Figure 1**  
**Use of a Dragnet or Seine**



**Figure 2**  
**Use of a Cast Net**



**Figure 3**  
**The Webbing of a Trammel Net**

