

Eighth Sunday before Pascha (Easter)
Judgment Sunday
Meat-fare Sunday
1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Matthew 25:31-46

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

HEAR the Word of God—

1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2

8Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. 9But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? 11So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. 12But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

9:1Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 2If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said, *31When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ 40And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ 41Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me*

into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ 45Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

SHARE thoughts and insights—

- Who is *the Son of Man* (Mt. 25:31)?
- Why do you think Jesus frequently referred to himself as *the Son of Man*?
- Character...
 - Describe the character of a sheep.
 - Describe the character of a goat.
 - Why do you think Jesus used these two animals to describe people at the Last Judgment?
 - Do you want to be a sheep or a goat? Why?
- The blessed... surprised?!...
 - Who are the ones on the king’s right, and what does he say to them?
 - What did they do to be called blessed?
 - Why are they surprised?
- The accursed... surprised?!...
 - Who are the ones on the king’s left, and what does he say to them?
 - What did they do to be called accursed? (If there are young children participating in this conversation, you might talk about the meaning of *accursed*.)
 - Why are they surprised?
- The importance of what we do...
 - In both the Epistle and the Gospel readings we learn how important what we do is, both for others and for ourselves. (Y)our example counts. Are you trying to live in love for Christ? The choice is yours with every choice you make throughout your life.
 - What does this statement, “Whatever we do to others we do to Christ,” mean to you—and for you?

GROW in faith—

“Yes, there is judgment. But it is we who judge ourselves by the thoughts we think, the values we hold, the decisions we make, the things we do, the people we are both here and in the afterlife.” (Father Theodore Stylianopoulos, *A Year of the Lord: Liturgical Bible Studies, Volume 3: Triodion and Lent*)

- Consider these two Scripture passages: *God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world* (1 John 4:16b-17). *So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all...* (Galatians 6:9-10a).
 - What are these passages saying to you?
 - What are they asking of you?
 - How are they calling you to grow?

SERVE one another in love—

- How do we nurture—cultivate—the attitude/ability to see Christ in each person and the desire to serve him in each person?
- Opportunities...
 - What opportunities to help others do you have?
 - Who is the hungry person or the thirsty person or the stranger or the naked person or the sick person or the prisoner to whom you have the opportunity and the responsibility to reach out to and help? As you do so, you will find yourself blessed in being a blessing.

PRAY—

Lord Jesus, help us to see you, love you, and serve you in each other. Amen.