

SUNDAY SERMON – 4TH Matthew – 2015-06-28

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

Υπακοή is a Greek word usually translated as obedience. It is derived from two root words: 1) υπο (meaning under or beneath); and 2) ἀκούω (meaning to hear). Neither to “under hear” or to “hear under” seems to make much sense to us. The definition has more to do with placing ourselves under another person’s instruction. Here is the definition from the lexicon of ὑπακοή.

1. obedience, compliance, submission
2. obedience rendered to anyone's counsels
3. an obedience shown in observing the requirements of Christianity

The Centurion in today’s Gospel reading (Matthew 8:5-13) powerfully conveys to us someone who understood obedience, authority, humility and faith. Though he was a Roman soldier and not a Jew, he understood that Jesus was a great man, perhaps more than a man, greater than any general of Rome. Jesus lifts him up as an example to his Jewish listeners at that time and to us today of someone worthy of God’s Heavenly Kingdom. Jesus goes on to say that many “*sons of the kingdom*”, people who think of themselves as worthy believers, will be left out of the kingdom. They will be left instead to the outer darkness, weeping and gnashing their teeth.

In today’s Epistle reading (Romans 6:8-23), St. Paul calls us to become “slaves of righteousness”. He warns us to turn back, to turn away from our previous life of sin. “*For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.*” This is a very serendipitous and timely warning.

St. Paul goes on to say, “*When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free*

from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The fallen world would have us refer to what God calls sin as righteousness, and to what God calls righteousness as sin. God is not fooled. I pray that you also may not be fooled by this fallen world. God is a God of Love...but He is also a God of Law. We need to seek the Love of God, His Truth and His Righteousness, by obeying His Law and living in His Love. God is, was and forever will be on His Throne. Kings, judges & presidents will come and go. Some will honor God and some will dishonor God. My prayer for you today is that you may be as bold and faithful as the centurion in today's Gospel, serving Caesar but only so far as man's law is in agreement with God's Law.

In 1965, Archbishop Iakovos famously marched in civil disobedience with Martin Luther King Jr. to the courthouse steps in Selma, Alabama. This was captured on the cover of LIFE Magazine. For me, that is the proudest moment in the history of the Greek Orthodox Church in America. I pray that when the time comes, each and every one of us will count the cost and go and do likewise.

Υπακοή: an obedience shown in observing the requirements of Christianity. I pray that God may give us all discernment, boldness, humility, courage and love to stand for the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To God be the glory, now and forever, and to the ages of ages, Amen.