



60th Year

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THE PARABLE OF THE MYRIAD TALANTS

The realization of sinfulness

With today's Gospel passage the Lord explained to the apostle Peter for what reason he ought to forgive each person who has been at fault towards him in whatsoever thing. Specifically, the apostle Peter asked the Lord up to how many times he ought to forgive those who sin against him. The Lord then answered him that he must forgive them innumerable times. In order to give him to understand this answer of His, He said the parable of the myriad talents. With this parable He teaches that a foundation and absolutely necessary presupposition in someone being forgiving towards others is the realization of his personal sinfulness. If someone realizes how sinful he is before God and how compassionate God is towards him, then he will very easily forgive everyone. But on the contrary also, the more someone is ignorant of his own sinfulness and his guilt towards God and his fellow men, all the more harsh and demanding he becomes towards others.

The essence of sin

In the parable God is likened to a king, whereas men with a slave of the King, who owes him a myriad, in other words 10,000 talents. The amount of the debt is astronomical. In order for us to perceive its magnitude, it suffices for us to merely run to the holy Scripture, to the 3rd book of Kings, where we are informed that the amount of the tax which all the nations paid all together, who were subjected to King Solomon did not surpass 700 talents. Consequently the myriad talents of the slave of the parable are equal in value to a myriad talents, in other words innumerable ones. Therefore so much is the debt of sins of each person towards God! No matter how many good works we do, it is impossible for us to pay off our debts.

At this point the question spontaneously arises: "For what reason are we so guilty before God?" We will receive the answer to this question, if we realize what sin is according to Christian teaching. Sin, Saint Silouan the Athonite observes, is primarily a spiritual phenomenon – metaphysical. Its roots

are found in the mystical depth of the spiritual nature of man. The essence of sin is comprised not in the breaking of moral principles, but in the apostasy from the eternal divine life, for which man was created and to which naturally – in other words, from his own nature – he was called to. Sin is committed primarily in the mystical depth of the human spirit, but its results wound all of humanity. When it is performed, it is reflected in the condition of man's soul and nature, in his external appearance, in the destiny of him who committed it, it goes out unavoidably beyond the boundaries of his individual life and burdens with evil the life of the whole of humanity, and consequently it is reflected in the destinies of the universe. It was not only the sin of the forefather Adam which had cosmic consequences. Every sin, manifest or hidden, of each one of us, influences the destiny of the whole world.

If one sin of Adam had such fearful consequences for the whole course of humanity, we can perceive how inconceivable is the magnitude of our sins, since we have not sinned just once, but daily we sin very many times secretly and manifestly, with thoughts, with words and with deeds. So we are saved for free, thanks to the vast ocean of God's compassion for us. We believe in God, we partake in the mysteries of the Church and we keep His commandments, not in order to expiate our salvation, but in order to allow God's mercy to be freely poured inside us and to renew us freely.

The evil slave in the end was locked in prison, because he did not show mercy to his fellow slave. From there he will never come out, because, if when he was outside of prison he was unable to pay off the debt, much more so now that he was imprisoned. This is the end, the Lord concludes, which everyone who does not forgive their fellow man from all their heart, will have.

Behind this behavior a very deep meaning is hidden. God is not revengeful towards anyone. He is love, as St. John the Theologian witnesses. In love, man finds his God and his salvation. Whoever does not forgive, does not have love much more so furthermore, when he himself is burdened with innumerable sins towards God and towards other people. So for this reason, he remains without God and consequently without hope. So let us always forgive others from our heart, so that the love of God can fit inside us and the remission of sins and eternal life can be given to us freely. Amen.

Archim. P. K.