



60th Year November 18, 2012 Pamphlet # 47 (3103)

THE PARABLE OF THE FOOLISH RICH MAN

The cause for the parable

The Lord said the parable of the Foolish Rich Man because of the argument between two brothers about the distribution of the estate. Specifically, as the Lord was teaching the people, someone from the crowd asked Him to speak to his brother, so that they could share their estate. Then the Lord answered him that His work here on earth was not to judge people and to distribute their estates. Furthermore, He focused their attention, both to him and to all the people, so that they could be safeguarded in every way from avarice, because the length and the meaning of life does not depend on the abundance of material goods. In order to make this saying of His clear, He said the parable of the Foolish Rich Man. From this, as Euthymios Zygavinos notes, it shows clearly that avarice, while it causes cares and sadnesses, cannot add life, and also that not only is it vain toil for someone to be avaricious, but it also harms him eternally.

The example of the Lord

The Lord's whole attitude is truly noteworthy. Christ decisively refused to get mixed up in the argument of the two brothers about their estate matters. On the contrary, He stressed to them that their whole care should turn to how they can become rich in the spiritual goods of God and not in the material belongings of temporal life. If the two brothers listened to him and oriented their life and heart in the direction He was indicating to them, automatically the arguments would cease between them, the injustices and the enmitous dispositions.

With the above ascertainment as cause, it is worth us noting the following important observations of archimandrite Sophrony Sacharov. The blessed elder stresses that the commandment of Christ which says "love our enemies" does not allow us, at all, to lower the gospel to the level of the brother killing-division of material goods. It is a complete mistake for bishops, theologians, and lay Christians in general, to enter into the ranks of the fighters for social justice to prevail. The Lord did not enter into the temptation to proceed on this path. So for this reason we also as His imitators

ought to avoid it. Our avoidance is dictated by the conscience that every change of condition in the social relationships in a revolutionary, in other words, in a forceful manner, will in the end prove to be the replacement of one violence for another. We don't have the right to realize forceful actions – even on the forceful – in the name of Christ. However let us censure injustice, living with intensity, in order to preserve justice for everyone, we are able and we do it, when we see benefit from our word.

The foolish rich man as an example to avoid

The Lord censuring injustice and avarice, presents through the parable, the type of the material-minded and egotistical person. The foolish rich man seemingly did not treat anyone unjustly. He had a rich harvest, because God blessed his fields. However without the slightest thought of gratitude toward God passing within him, and having a train of thought “they are mine and I do whatever I want with them”, he entered into many cares and thoughts about where to gather his fruits, so that they would be preserved for a long time. That which interested him only was the piling up of abundant wealth, in order to live many years, comfortably eating and drinking and amusing himself.

The reality however proved completely different from what he thought. His wealth, which he considered a source of joy and happiness, became a source of anxiety, disturbance and superfluous cares. And the life, which he considered a given and secured, like smoke was dissolved in one night. And the worst thing, whereas he was not thinking of anyone, the demons were thinking of him, who, according to the book of Revelation, day and night criticize people before the throne of God (Rev. 12:10), and, as the Lord witnesses in the parable, they demand the souls of the unjust ones and the sinners. So, whatever he considered completely his own, and his estate, which could not be taken away, wealth, life, happiness, everything, vanished in one unexpected moment.

That's what whoever does not hope in God, but in their own, self suffers, without caring at all about any person. So for this reason, it is a basic mark of prudence and a realization of the reality for us to understand that all goods belong to God. Whatever we have, springs from God. Therefore, we ought to be grateful and to constantly glorify the Lord for everything and to not consider ourselves the possessors of anything, not even of our life. In all goods, we are stewards and treasurers, and as such we ought to handle them as comforts the Lord and God of all. And since God is love, only in love as the Lord Jesus taught us, are we able to find the correct handling of all earthly goods.

Living with this train of thought – in other words, having the mind of Christ – not only will we not be unjust and avaricious to the detriment of any person, but much more so, we will prefer to constantly empty our own self, in order to fill others and to comfort God. In this voluntary emptying, is hidden the solution to all social problems, happiness, true wealth and eternal life.

Archim. P. K.