LORD'S VOICE

APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE

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THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Luke 16:19-31)
The "bondage" of man to material goods

The Lord said, "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazaros, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazaros in his bosom. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazaros to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazaros in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses, and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to them, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.'"

THE VANITY OF WEALTH

The Gospel passage read today at the Divine Liturgy is a pre-eminently parabolic and allegorical narrative, rich in imagery and contrasts. Through this method of instruction, which in the Lord's time was widely employed in Palestine, Christ helps His listeners understand His teaching and arouses their interest, in order subsequently to reveal the deeper meaning of the parables.

Today, we shall highlight some characteristic points of this passage that will help us approach it more substantially.

The rich ruler and poor Lazarus

The figures around whom the narrative revolves are the rich ruler, who was clothed in “purple and fine linen,” that is, in exceedingly costly garments, and who rejoiced and feasted sumptuously every day; and, on the other hand, the poor, sickly, and patient Lazarus, who lay cast down at the rich man's gate, covered with sores and longing to satisfy his hunger with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. In time, however, both of them died. The poor man was carried near God, into the heavenly Kingdom; the rich man found himself “in the place of torment” and everlasting fire. Thus, in this manner, on an eschatological level henceforth, the conditions of their earthly lives foundationally changed. Lazarus rejoices and is glad in God, while the rich man suffers and is in anguish.

The meaning of the parable

At first glance, one might suppose that this parable is concerned simply and solely with drawing attention to social inequalities, the denunciation of injustice, the condemnation of wealth, the praise of poverty, and the proper and just distribution of goods among people. Certainly, the historical and social context of human life is not a matter of indifference to Christ, for He teaches and acts as the Savior of mankind within the specific circumstances of their daily existence. However, this is not His

primary aim, because Christ is not some social reformer and teacher, but the Son of the living God, who came into the world not simply to improve the conditions of life, but to become our life.

Consequently, in this parable neither material possessions nor the rich man are condemned because he is rich. Likewise, Lazarus is neither praised nor justified before God on account of his sickness and his poverty. In such a case, the narrative would lead to conclusions marked by social paradox and theological error, as though wealth or poverty were the supreme criterion of a person's spiritual condition.

The proper use of wealth

There are wealthy people, endowed with authority and social power who are characterized by genuine modesty and humility, and who, through their deeds and their character, become examples of love. Without publicizing their charitable works, they help and support in various ways their suffering fellow man and the philanthropic ministry of the Church. And then, there are poor people who show irreverence toward God, harbor unreasonable demands, and behave improperly toward others. Therefore, the right use of wealth and the prudent handling of poverty reveal a person to be truly faithful before God.

The Psalmist, in Psalm 33, reminds us of something that human thought has recognized from the most ancient times: that the rich who placed their trust in their riches ultimately became poor. But those who placed their hope in the Lord and sought Him with longing shall not be deprived of any good thing. May it be that throughout our lives, in times of happiness and adversity, sorrow and joy, we be seeking the Lord, so that our whole being may be filled with the Light of His Countenance.

Archimandrite N. K.

November 1, 2026: 5th SUNDAY OF LUKE

The Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian, and their mother Theodote.
Venerable David of Euboea (16th c.).
Hieromartyr James of Aetolia and his disciples.

Pl. 1st Tone – Eothinon: 11 – Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:7 – Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

NEXT SUNDAY: November 8, 7th Sunday of Luke
Epistle: Hebrews 2:2-10 – Gospel: Luke 8:41-56

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