



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

The Pathos of Selfishness November 8, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our midst! He is and every shall be!

But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, Father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:29:31)

The Gospel of Luke is the only one of the four Gospels to record our Lord's telling of the Parable of Dives (the rich man) and Lazarus. It is a sad parable: sad, because of the lack of compassion that the rich man shows to the beggar Lazarus, and sad, because of the fact the rich man has condemned his own soul by his continued lack of compassion for the beggar. The story is told with great pathos. The poor beggar sits each day at the gates of the rich man's house waiting for the table scraps to be thrown to him by those who feast inside. His state is pitiable, lamentable. Filled with sores, he waits for a paltry handout, and only the dogs of the street come to ease his suffering by licking his sores. When he dies, the beggar goes to the bosom of the patriarch Abraham, comforted by the God of compassion who receives him joyfully, binding up his wounds and giving him peace after a long life of struggle and suffering. The rich man also dies and goes to a place of anguish: anguish for his sins, realizing too late that he had spent his life in selfish pursuits, closed to the possibility of helping those in need around him. In anguish, he begs Abraham to send a warning to his brothers, whom he fears will fall into the

same condition upon their deaths as well. But Abraham tells him that there is no need for any sort of special miracle or divine emissary; “they have Moses and the prophets,” he tells the rich man; “let them hear them.”

The pathos in this parable is twofold: first, we are saddened to hear of the way in which the beggar Lazarus is treated; but, second, we are saddened at the fate of the rich man as well. It is of course inexcusable that the beggar should be so treated, while those on the other side of the gated property of the rich man feast royally. But how much sadder it is, Brothers and Sisters, that the rich man in the story pays no heed of the beggar. His heart has turned to stone; his soul, if alive at all, is cemented in its own selfishness.

If our hearts have not yet turned to stone, and if there is still spiritual life in our souls, we cannot come away from this parable without realizing that we are accused. What will Christ say to us, I wonder, on the great and glorious last day, when we stand before Him in judgment? We are citizens of the wealthiest land the world has ever known; we are dripping in riches, with food literally stockpiled for use by those who can afford it. We buy and we satisfy our own desires without regard for the poor and oppressed or our land and without any recognition of those who starve each day in the poorest parts of the world. We live to satisfy our own selfishness, stockpiling goods and sitting on treasure chests of money, while others go without. There is no compassion in our government to be sure; but, is there any in us?

The day of salvation, St. Paul preached is today; the time is now! If we continue as the rich man continued until his death in the parable, we shall be as was he. We too shall enter a place of anguish – not of God’s wrath or anger, but anguish of our own regret – regret that we knew and did nothing, regret that we lived our own lives only for ourselves and for our own selfish “freedom,” to do as we wanted rather than what we should have done to protect and help others. Remember that freedom in the New Testament is freedom from our own passions, our own selfish desires; it is freedom to serve as Christ serves. It is not freedom to do our own thing or to be unencumbered by concern for others, regardless of what the despicable politicians say. Freedom is freedom to serve. This is the reminder of the Parable of Dives and Lazarus, a parable of pathos for those whose hearts are stone, and whose souls are ill with greed and selfishness. Let us, Brothers and Sisters, not be among them!

Fr. Elias

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