

LUKE 16:19-31

19. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:
20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,
21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.
22. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;
23. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
24. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.
25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.
26. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.
27. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:
28. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.
29. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.
30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.
31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

One can't really say that the rich man in this parable was a bad man. The Savior doesn't tell us that he became rich through evil means. He was simply rich and enjoyed his wealth. In fact, most people in today's society would probably state that he had the right to live as he pleased. His wealth was his own, so why shouldn't he be free to enjoy it in any manner that he desired? It is even possible to see him as a loving person, as evidenced by his touching concern for his brothers and their spiritual welfare. Such thinking, however, dramatically demonstrates how the values of the world differ from and even conflict with Christ's teachings.

According to the teachings of our Church, God is the creator and master of everything in the universe. We as people were bought by Jesus Christ from God the Father, who paid for us with His very blood. Therefore, He is our master. As our master, however, He is not a tyrant but wants to be our loving Father. In His position as our Father, He provides for us in every way

possible that we want or need. Everything that we have has been given to us through His love for us.

At the same time, He asks us to be true children and emulate Him. He wants us to become God-like because this is what we were created for and the only way that we can attain true and eternal happiness. He gives us our life on earth as a time to strive for and attain God-likeness. He gives us all that we want and need but requires us to use this correctly. And He warns us that we will have to answer to Him for absolutely everything, even our most personal and secret thoughts and desires.

Not only does the Savior provide for all of our needs, often He will give us much more than what we actually need. There is a reason for this generosity. By doing this, He is giving us an opportunity to emulate Him. He expects us to share with others part of what He has given us to help those that don't possess but need what we have in abundance. When we sacrifice and share, we are showing our love for our neighbor. And by growing in love, we become more God-like. This is that fatal mistake made by the rich man. There was nothing wrong with his using what God provided for him. But it was an evil selfishness in using it only for his own pleasure. God even made it easy for him to share. Lying in the street outside of the very entrance to his home was a human being desperately in need of help. But the rich man had no time for him. He was too busy partying.

We are blessed to live in a time and place where we have most everything that we need. We even often have much more than we actually need to survive. We live very comfortably. But, we are warned by the Gospel to examine our hearts and see if we are using correctly all that the good Lord has provided for us. Do we consider that what we have is our own to use as we please? Or, do we understand that we will be held accountable, not according to the values of the world, but according to the moral expectations of the Savior? The Gospel reading warns us that this temptation can so overwhelm us that even if God sends us saints from Heaven to personally speak to us, we still might ignore them. We see this warning in the answer that Abraham gave to the rich man in response to his plea to send Lazarus to warn his brothers about what awaits them if they don't correct their way of living.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what a blessing it is that we have such a loving Heavenly Father who takes such good care of us. Let us therefore, also take to heart all that He teaches us through His Gospel, and live faithfully according to His commandments. Let us remember that the more we show our love and concern for others during our life here on earth, the greater will our reward be in the eternal life. Earthly wealth is fragile and can be lost in a second. Heavenly wealth can never be lost, but will be ours to enjoy for an eternity.

With Love in Christ,

Archpriest Serge Kotar