

LUKE 18: 18-27

18. And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

20. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

21. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

22. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

27. And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

According to the word's of the Savior, it is most difficult for a rich person to achieve salvation. You might ask, why is this so? The actions of the certain ruler clearly demonstrate why. Here was a person who fulfilled during his entire life all of the commandments given to people by God. At the same time, he was unable to do what was most important, what could not only save him but could even assure sainthood. He could not make God the most important thing in his life. In fact, his deity was not God but his wealth. This is the powerful danger in being rich. Our wealth becomes our god. It can control and overwhelm us. It can even cause us to do very evil things to maintain or increase it.

If wealth is such a dangerous possession, why does God allow people to have it? Because wealth in itself is not evil. In fact, it can be a great blessing. It all depends on what one does with it. God allows some people to possess wealth because He knows that that person has the potential to use the wealth to the great benefit of others. And in fact, this often happens. Some rich people do use their great wealth not only for themselves and their enjoyment, but to the great benefit of society, especially those that are suffering. Unfortunately, they are the minority in the company of the rich.

As the children of God, we are called to be god-like, to selflessly love our neighbor. God supplies us with the means to do this. For this purpose, He places wealth in the hands of those people who by their nature can be generous. Sadly though, having the potential to be a kind and generous person does not guarantee that one will become one. As we can see, many rich people use their wealth only for themselves. Others will even use it to do evil. Still others have the

desire to use their wealth correctly but don't get around to it, being distracted by other concerns and needs in their life. As the saying goes: "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." But what we must never forget is that no matter what we receive from God, we will have to answer to Him on how we use it. Were we godlike or were we selfish? Did we use our wealth correctly or did we waste God's gifts to us?

Our Savior has given us an incredible promise. In His Sermon on the Mount, He promises us that if we make the pursuit of the Kingdom of God the prime concern in our life, He as our loving Father will supply us with everything that we need. In fact, He even gives us more than what we need. Unfortunately, due to our sinfulness, we don't trust Him. This is our common great spiritual problem. Instead of submitting to His will, we try to dictate to Him and tell Him what we need or want. We demand things which just might be what will separate us from God and cause us to lose our souls.

My dear brothers and sisters, it is not forbidden to want to be wealthy or even to ask God for this. But is it not better to just trust in the will of God and be satisfied with what He has given us? As He warns us: "for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his life?" (Matt: 16:26) May He open our hearts to understand and accept this truth. Indeed, what can be more precious to us than our souls?

With Love in Christ,

Archpriest Serge Kotar