

Spiritual Commentary on the Gospel Readings of the Days of the Great Lent by Father Louka Sidarous (10)

Tuesday of the Second Week of Holy Lent

The Gospel according to St. Mark (10:17-27)

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is [a]for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"

27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

My master, I ask You about the young man who came running to You, knelt before You, and asked You about life and the eternal inheritance. For what reason did he immediately retreat leaving You being sad and sorrowful?

According to the flesh, he came running, he knelt and asked. These were outwardly actions. However, internally he worshiped his money.

How can this be rectified?

What is the benefit if this is the final conclusion?

Which path should I choose?

How sad and regrettable is that?

Teach me to reconcile my internal intentions and my outwardly behavior so that my appearance matches my inner intentions. Let me worship You with an undivided heart. Let the body serve You by expressing the movements of my heart, worshiping no one but You.

Worshiping according to the flesh is of no benefit. What does the movements of the body in prayers, kneeling and prostrations, fasting and ascetism benefit anyone if the heart is not steadfast in the love of Jesus?

The core of worship is in the heart not the flesh. Let me start by purifying my intentions before I pray or fast and give, lest I labor in vain, and my actions become of no value when my heart is tied down with shackles.

Master, you examine the hearts!!

The young man acted as if he must fulfill certain obligations and commandments thinking that God owed him the reward. This is the old understanding of the Jewish pharisees: that is to fulfill some tasks and obligations towards God. Even these obligations, the young man did not fulfill, but he neglected the central and most important one which is loving the Lord from all the heart, all understanding, all strength and all ability.

I wondered why the Lord did not spell out all the commandments in the correct order as written in Moses' law. The Lord listed the commandments in the order that the man's ability to keep them. The Lord concluded the commandments with that of honoring your father and mother which precedes all the other commandments concerned with dealing with other people. The first commandment pertains to man's relationship with God, then honoring thy father and mother followed by the commandments regulating how to deal with other people.

Master, if I possess your love first and foremost, then my actions towards others will consequently be sound. On the other hand, if Your love did not dwell and reign in my heart, it is impossible to act in a good way with others for You only are the source of all goodness.

How feeble is the heart when it is tied to outside desires? Trivial matters can occupy the heart and dominate it. The heart becomes attached and enslaved and is unable to seek God. The human heart is weak. It is quite weak when it is subjected to the lust of possession or when attracted to the lust of the eyes or love of the world, running after shadows like a mirage.

I am certain that riches and worldly possessions are not the impediment. There are many rich people who live piously in the fear of God. However, it is the love of money and possessions that corrupts when it afflicts the heart. My master, is it possible for me to own possessions and not become attached to them in my heart? Teach me Lord. Liberate my heart from all the impure attachments that lead to death. Let me only utilize the worldly things but preserve my heart for You only.

* "Go and sell"

This action requires courage and needs Your grace. It is a call for freedom for those who understand Your words, Lord Jesus. Some accepted it and their inner vision was enlightened and they acted on it to the letter. St Anthony is one example, but millions of pious people lived through it the glorious liberty of the children of God. Although they were entrusted with material and worldly possession, their hearts remained subject to You and to You only, a dwelling for Your glory.

Fr. Louka Sidarous