



Father Joseph's Outline for the Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee

Luke 18:10-14 - Sunday 02/08/2009

“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” (Luke 15:24)

Insight into the importance of this parable

- This is the last of a three-parable series that also includes “the lost sheep” and “the lost coin”.
- The Lord spoke this parable as the Pharisees and scribes murmured against Him, because “all the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Him to listen to Him” (Luke 15:1).
 - When the Pharisees accused Jesus of associating Himself with sinners, they had in mind the verse from the psalms: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2).
- Jesus responded with this beautiful parable.
- Only the Lord could have spoken such a parable, which portrays the depth and the mystery of God's goodness towards sinners.
- The Fathers of the Church purposely appointed this parable to be read on the second Sunday of the *Triodion*, in order that people might understand its significance to their lives.
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What are the precious jewels of this parable?

- The Father represents the figure of God, and the sons represent us His children, the people of the Law and the Gentiles as well.
- The Father gave his son all that which he asked him for, without any debate.
 - “And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.” (Luke 15:12)
- The son felt restricted by the presence and rules of his father. He wanted to distance himself from his father. Even though he did that, the father did not stop loving him.
 - “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)
- The wealth which the young man received from his father is all the spiritual talents and gifts that God gives to His creation to enable them to grow into His divine image.
 - “And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’” (Luke 15:12)

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- The freedom which the younger son wanted for himself is the freedom of this world, which appears on the surface to be a bright and attractive future.
- It starts with no self-discipline, engaging in lust and loose sexuality, other forms of abuse, and breaking the law of God, even to shedding blood.
 - “But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him” (Luke 15:30).

Who are the main characters in this parable?

- There are four main figures in this parable: the younger son (before leaving home), the prodigal son (after leaving home); the older son who feels self-righteous; and the father.
- The first three figures together represent the state of fallen man in different stages of his relationship with God.
- These three figures are put in contrast to the compassionate father and need to struggle to free themselves from their weaknesses, becoming like the all-giving and compassionate Father.

Very important conclusions

- Jesus does not associate Himself with sin. Jesus associates Himself with sinners to draw them near to Him in order to heal them, and He asks them not to go back to sin.
 - “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.’” (John 5:14)
- Jesus is more careful in directing people not to commit sin than those who rejected Him. Jesus does not condemn only adultery; He extends adultery to include even thoughts as early as the stage of desire. He does not only condemn killing, but even hate or insults.
 - “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder’... But I say to you ... whoever says [to his brother], ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5:21-22)
- Jesus did not open the gates of the kingdom to unrepentant criminals or sinners. He opened only to repentant and sorrowful sinners.
 - “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Corinthians 6:9)

Prayer

Holy Father, I have forgotten Your glory. I have scattered the riches which You gave to me. And now I cry to You, as did the prodigal son: O God, I have sinned before You. Receive me, O merciful Father, as a penitent, accept my repentance, and make me as one of Your hired servants. Amen.

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