

The Parable of the Ten Minas, and poisonous self-talk.

Luke 19:12-28 9th Friday of St Luke or 27th Thursday after Pentecost

Nov 24/Dec/07 – 2018, After Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos

http://www.orthodox.net/sermons/pen-thu-26_2018+parable-of-the-ten-minas-and-poisonous-self-talk_luke19-12-28.doc

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Audio: http://www.orthodox.net/sermons/pen-thu-26_2018+parable-of-the-ten-minas-and-poisonous-self-talk_luke19-12-28.mp3

VIDEO: (with Axe-man “helping”) <https://youtu.be/MEI-pEt6OM8>



There are two parables about giving of money from the master with the expectation that the servant given the money would trade with it and gain more. In the parable of the talents, one servant received 10, another five, and another one talent. In the parable about the minas, which we are looking at today, there were 10 servants who each received one mina apiece.

In both parables, there was an ungrateful and unfruitful servant who took his one piece of money and buried it in the ground. There are significant differences between these parables but the actions of the ungrateful and unfruitful servants in both of them are identical. It is fruitful to look at the psychology of these men.

The ungrateful and unprofitable servant buried the money and did not make any attempt to be fruitful with it, after he consulted only with himself. Sinful, proud and self-reliant man is inclined to listen to himself above the voices of anyone else. True humility is to not trust our own opinions but always check them against those who have more wisdom than we do.

How we do this? By being children of the church. We trust in what the church teaches because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and to change the phrase a little bit, it is from the “mouth of God to our ears”. In “Faith enrichment” last night, we were talking about the progression of sin and there was the question: “how does a person know the difference between thoughts about good things and thoughts about bad things?”. The only way to know it is to live in the heart. Man has a deep heart and God abides in the heart, and where God is, there is only truth and no falsehood. Perhaps that is not a very good answer for some, because the next question is: “how you get God in your heart”?

We receive God in our heart by love, and obedience, and submission, and humility. We received him by participation in His grace which He gives us freely. God does not give us of Himself – that is give His grace - in order for us to sit around and do nothing and bury the grace. A life lived without activity and the struggle to do the work good works is not a Christian life.

God can come into our heart anytime He wishes, but He chooses to only enter the heart that is struggling to prepare a place for Him. We struggle, and sometimes we do well and sometimes we do poorly, and God sees the struggle and enters our heart. Do you understand now the difference between the reformer theology about works and the true Christian theology about them? There are no works which can make our heart be pure enough for God, but God, seeing our works, and even our failed attempts to do them, comes into our hearts and warms us and enlightens us.

We start with small things and we continue the small things as we do great things. We fast as the church teaches us to fast, because we do not know a better way. We submit to our spiritual father and we trust his judgment. We confess

frequently and commune frequently because we are obedient to the way of life that is in the church. Many Orthodox Christians feel that they have a better way and do not commune or confess frequently. They are speaking to themselves and not listening to the church. We attend the services frequently, including the services that prepare us for the holy mysteries such as Vespers or the Vigil service with Vespers and Matins, because this is the way of life. Those who talk to themselves say they don't have time or they need to do this or they need to do that, but those who listen to the church find the time. We read the Scriptures constantly (especially the Gospels in the Psalter), trying to glean from them direction about what is right and what is wrong, what is alive and what is dead. Only God knows these things, and He will share them freely with the soul that is sitting at his feet listening.

Let us look a little bit more closely at the words of the sinful servant who was given one mina, and see how his self-talk contained the truth but he could not recognize it. He didn't understand that he had a great opportunity to participate in the grace of God, in His works. This is what the one mina represents. It is the grace of God given to us, and we ourselves should feel obligated from *within ourselves* to trade in this grace and gain more for ourselves and for others. This is a great privilege. Our God trusts us sinful men to do holy things. He will *not* do these holy things for us, although *he* will help us when we are doing them.

Let's look the words of the man:" ... Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." (Luke 19:20b,21)

Part of this man's speech within himself was true and part of it was false, and because he only consulted himself, he only believed the false part. Of course, it is false that the Lord is austere, but it is true that He does take up what He does not lay down and He reaps what He does not sow. This is speaking of good works done by sinful people, with God helping them. In the Gospel the Lord once told His disciples that they would do greater works than He would. We are called to do good works, and it is a privilege to do them. The Lord will not do them for us.

Why does the Lord agree with the man when he characterizes him as "austere"? The reason why is because man talking within himself believes the Lord is austere. Look at the entire theology of the Reformation - it is full of an austere God who judges those who are sinners. Our God is not austere. He is exacting and requires of us that we live as we speak. If we don't live according to the things we say we believe, we are liars and the truth is not in us. It is because of love that God spurs us on to do good works, because if we struggle to them our hearts will be opened to the love of God, and He will become more manifest in our deep heart, which was made to contain Him. Only a good heart can contain God.

The wonder is that it matters not if we have the ability to do we works, God will help us to accomplish them when He wishes, and if we do not accomplish the good work, He commends us for our efforts and rewards us. It is a wonder above wonders is that of person who sins can develop a good heart. All he needs to do is try. We have no ability whatsoever to do good, but God has the ability to help us when we try to do good.

If you consult only yourself, you will always be wrong. The rich man with the great harvest spoke within himself and asked himself what he should do. His answer, to himself, from himself, was terribly wrong. The Pharisee when he went to pray in the temple, instead of praying, spoke as the parable says, "within himself", and his prayer was one of judgment and arrogance without any self-knowledge whatsoever. The ungrateful servant given the one mina spoke within himself and put the grace of God in a napkin and buried it. The fathers tell us that wrapping the mina in a napkin reminds us of the burial shroud of Jesus Christ, which contained a dead body. The ungrateful servant, speaking within himself, convinced himself that grace, which is the only power that gives life, should be treated as something dead and buried.

Let us flee from consulting only ourselves and let us, because of gratitude that God has given us of himself, that is His grace, struggle to do good works.