

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Pharisees and teachers of the Law drew nigh unto the Lord. They did so to accuse Him of eating with sinners. And that He had done. Thanks be to God. The Gospel according to St. Luke says that they “muttered” against Him. In response to their muttering, the Lord speaks three parables to them – the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son.

And then He turned to His disciples, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law still listening, and said “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods...” The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law had been entrusted with the “goods”. They had the Scriptures. They had the Law. They had the Divine Liturgy. They sat in positions of authority in the church of their day. But they were not good stewards of things God had entrusted to them.

They used them to become rich and well-known. They used them to retain authority. They used them for high positions in society. They were bad stewards. They squandered the Master’s goods. And they did so for their own temporal gain, all the while believing that it was to their eternal benefit. But it wasn’t. For the Master Himself took on Flesh and stood before them, rebuking them. But they knew neither Him nor His Word.

So any benefit they derived from His goods was short-lived. They squandered their Master’s goods on this life, when they should have been striving to ensure their wellbeing in the life to come. So it is in mercy that the Lord spoke the account of an unjust steward. The steward was lazy. He was a liar and a thief. When called to account for his stewardship, he didn’t even know how much the debtors owed. Unjust is the opposite of righteous. It is the strongest condemnation.

And yet, in what seems to be a surprise ending to the Lord’s account, the master commended the unjust steward. He did not commend him for his sloth. He did not commend him for lying. He did not commend him for stealing. He commended him for his shrewdness. Called to account for his stewardship, realizing that he had been caught in sin, the steward employed every resource at his disposal to insure his wellbeing in the life to come.

And the Lord sums up His account with an admonition: “... make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.” It is from that admonition that the Lord’s Words bring the meaning of the account to us.

The Lord’s Words, Divine Words, invite each of us to consider if we have been good stewards, or unjust stewards – whether our hearts and minds have been dedicated to riches in this life, or to our eternal wellbeing in the life to come. The Lord’s Words call each of us to account for our use of the good Gifts that God has given to us.

So the Apostle writes that Israel is an example for us. He bids you to consider your conduct and compare it to their. He bids you to consider the consequences of their conduct, and to amend your ways lest you suffer the consequences they suffered.

Sin has consequences – temporal consequences, and eternal consequences. And to remove any excuse, the Apostle reminds you – no temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man. And the Lord reminds you – no pleasure in this life is worth forfeiting the life to come.

So consider your life, your thoughts, your works. Have you been singularly dedicated to ensuring your wellbeing in the life to come? Have you been “shrewd”, employing all the earthly gifts God has given you in ways that please Him, ways that are in accord with a place in His everlasting home?

You must admit that you haven’t. You’ve fallen short. All men do. But God, the true master, does for you what the Apostle promises – he makes for you a way of escape, an escape from condemnation, an escape from death. Hear the Word of the Lord: “In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity...” That Atonement is the God who took on Flesh and ate with sinners.

In return for His mercy, because He is Truth, the unjust crucified Him. In love, He used it for good, your good. In His shed Blood is the promised escape from your sins. For with His life, in mercy, He provided the promised Atonement. He was the Perfect Steward, sinless and holy, who forsook the riches of heaven to humble Himself to reconcile you to God. He gave His life that your debt with the Master be settled. And He took up His life again, that in Him you have new life, life that cannot be taken away.

That life, worked in you by the Holy Spirit, is a God-pleasing life, a life lived in the fear and love of God. As the Apostle promises, “by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.” God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. In Christ He makes for you the way of escape, that you may avoid evil and do good.

That is His promise to you. It is the promise that brings you strength and hope in the face of tribulation and adversity. It is the promise that fortifies your faith, that you say “No!” to sin, and walk in the Way of Righteousness. He fills you with baptismal faith, so that you know the salvific value of the Gifts God gives you. And in faith, you use them to the glory of His Name, to the edifying of His Holy Church, to bless your neighbor, and to your eternal benefit.

This day the God who ate with sinners bids you eat of Him. By His Holy Meal He strengthens you here as He did Israel in the desert. You eat and drink Christ, the Rock, for the forgiveness of your sins. Your faith is made strong. You receive comfort, hope, consolation, and joy.

You eat His Body and drink His Blood, and you are made One with Christ, One with His holy angels, and One with the One, Holy, catholic and Apostolic Church. And you receive the sure Promise that God will receive you into His everlasting home.

So rejoice, dear Christian. Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established. For Christ has satisfied your debt to God. In Christ, you are free.

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