

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ
ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ
ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ & Μ. ΒΡΕΤΑΝΝΙΑΣ



ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ THE WORD OF OUR LORD

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Δ' ΛΟΥΚΑ
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Τῶν 350 Πατέρων τῆς Ζ΄ Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου, Φιλίππου ἀποστόλου, Θεοφάνους ὁμολογητοῦ, Ζηναΐδος μάρτυρος
*Of the 350 Holy Fathers of the Seventh Oecumenical Council,
Philip (one of the Seven Deacons & apostle), Theophanes bishop & Confessor, Zenais Martyr*

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Τίτ. γ', 8-15

Τέκνον Τίτε, πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, καὶ περὶ τούτων βούλομαι σε διαβεβαιοῦσθαι, ἵνα φροντίζωσιν καλῶν ἔργων προΐστασθαι οἱ πεπιστευκότες θεῷ. ταῦτά ἐστιν καλὰ καὶ ὡφέλιμα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· μωρὰς δὲ ζητήσεις καὶ γενεαλογίας καὶ ἔριν καὶ μάχας νομικὰς περιΐστασο, εἰσὶν γὰρ ἀνωφελεῖς καὶ μάταιοι. αἱρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον μετὰ μίαν καὶ δευτέραν νουθεσίαν παραίτοῦ, εἰδὼς ὅτι ἔξεστραπταὶ δ τοιοῦτος καὶ ἀμαρτάνει, ὃν αὐτοκατάκριτος. "Οταν πέμψω Ἀρτεμᾶν πρὸς σὲ ἡ Τυχικόν, σπούδασον ἔλθεῖν πρός με εἰς Νικόπολιν, ἐκεῖ γὰρ κέκρικα παραχειμάσαι. Ζηνᾶν τὸν νομικὸν καὶ Ἀπολλῶν σπουδαίως πρόπεμψον, ἵνα μηδὲν αὐτοῖς λείπῃ. μανθανέτωσαν δὲ καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι καλῶν ἔργων προΐστασθαι εἰς τὰς ἀναγκαίας χρείας, ἵνα μὴ ὅσιν ἄκαρποι. Ἀσπάζονται σε οἱ μετ' ἐμοῦ πάντες. Ἀσπασαι τοὺς φιλοῦντας ἡμᾶς ἐν πίστει. ή χάρις μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

EPISTLE READING

Tit. 3: 8-15

Titus, my son, the saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile. As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned. When I send Artemas or Tychicos to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful. All who are with me send greeting to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

We have to pray with our own words - that is the personal, 'confessional' prayer. It is very comforting and we should practice it, because it aids us in combating loneliness. During this kind of prayer, we simply converse with the Lord, portraying to Him with our own thoughts our concerns to our heavenly Father. As this prayer is a product of our heart, it is impossible for God to disregard such a prayer. However we have here two problems: the first is that we tend to close the perfect God in the very narrow frame of our vision: we want God to act when and exactly how we want. The second problem is the wandering of the mind...

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Λουκ. η', 5-15

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην· Ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπεῖραι τὸν σπόρον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν τῷ σπείρειν αὐτὸν ὃ μὲν ἔπεσε παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν, καὶ κατεπάτηθη, καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατέφαγεν αὐτό· καὶ ἔτερον ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν, καὶ φυὲν ἔξηράνθη διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ἰκμάδα· καὶ ἔτερον ἔπεσεν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἀκανθῶν, καὶ συμφυεῖσαι αἱ ἀκανθαὶ ἀπέπνιξαν αὐτό. καὶ ἔτερον ἔπεσεν εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀγαθήν, καὶ φυὲν ἐποίησε καρπὸν κατονταπλασίονα. ταῦτα λέγων ἐφώνει· ὃ ἔχων ὡτα ἀκούειν ἀκούετω. Ἐπηρώτων δὲ αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες· τίς εἴη ἡ παραβολὴ αὕτη; ὃ δὲ εἶπεν· ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ, τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς ἐν παραβολαῖς, ἵνα βλέποντες μὴ βλέψωσι καὶ ἀκούοντες μὴ συνιῶσιν. ἔστι δὲ αὕτη ἡ παραβολὴ· ὁ σπόρος ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ· οἱ δὲ παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν εἰσιν οἱ ἀκούσαντες, εἴτα ἔρχεται ὁ διάβολος καὶ αἴρει τὸν λόγον ἀπὸ τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν, ἵνα μὴ πιστεύσαντες σωθῶσιν. οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς πέτρας οἱ δταν ἀκούσωσι, μετὰ χαρᾶς δέχονται τὸν λόγον, καὶ οὗτοι ῥίζαν οὐκ ἔχουσιν, οἵ πρὸς καιρὸν πιστεύουσι καὶ ἐν καιρῷ πειρασμοῦ ἀφίστανται. τὸ δὲ εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας πεσόν, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἀκούσαντες, καὶ ὑπὸ μεριμνῶν καὶ πλούτου καὶ ἡδονῶν τοῦ βίου πορεύομενοι συμπνίγονται καὶ οὐ τελεσφοροῦσι. τὸ δὲ ἐν τῇ καλῇ γῇ, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἵτινες ἐν καρδίᾳ καλῇ καὶ ἀγαθῇ ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον κατέχουσι καὶ καρποφοροῦσιν ἐν ὑπομονῇ. ταῦτα λέγων ἐφώνει· ὃ ἔχων ὡτα ἀκούειν ἀκούετω.

GOSPEL READING

Luke 8: 5-15

The Lord said this parable: «A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold». And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, «To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience». As he said these things, he cried out «He who has ears to hear, let him hear».

ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΥ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑΤΟΣ

‘Ο ἄνθρωπος ὃς γῇ δίδουσα καρποὺς

Ο θεὸς ἀποκαλύπτει τὴν ἀλήθεια τῆς δημιουργίας καὶ τῆς σωτηρίας στὸν ἄνθρωπο μὲ χίλιους δυὸ τρόπους. Θαύματα, μακαρισμοί, διδασκαλίες, θυσία καί, κορυφαῖο ὅλων, ἡ Ἀνάσταση καὶ ἀποστολὴ τοῦ Παρακλήτου εἶναι ἡ διαρκὴς μαρτυρία τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ στὸν κόσμο, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀδιάλλειπτης φροντίδας του γιὰ τὸν κόσμο, μὲ συνεργὸ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν ἄνθρωπο. Ό ἄνθρωπος, ὃς τὸ πλέον ἀγαπητὸ καὶ κορυφαῖο ὃν τῆς δημιουργίας, ἔχει ἀποστολὴ νὰ περιθάλψει, νὰ καλλιεργήσει καὶ νὰ πολλαπλασιάσει

τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας. Γινεται ἔτσι «γῆ», δπου ὁ λόγος ὡς σπέρμα προορίζεται νὰ δυνα- μώσει, νὰ ἀναπτυχθεῖ, νὰ ἀνθίσει καὶ νὰ δώσει καρπούς. Βέβαια, δπως μᾶς καταδεικνύει ἡ σημερινὴ παραβολὴ τοῦ Σπορέως, ὁ ἀνθρωπος δὲν ἐτοιμάζει πάντα τὴν ψυχή του νὰ γίνει γῆ εὔφορη πρὸς καρποφορία. "Ἄλλοι ἀπὸ μᾶς ἔχουμε πέτρινη ψυχή, ἄλλοι κάνουμε τὴν ψυχή μας δημόσιο πέρασμα ἀφήνοντας τὸν καθένα νὰ βαδίσει πάνω της, ἄλλοι ζητοῦμε νὰ παραμείνουμε στο περιθώριο τῆς θείας δημιουργίας, ἐνῶ ἄλλοι τὴν καθιστοῦμε φυτώ- ριο πονηρίας καὶ εὐχαρίστησης.

Μία τέτοια ψυχή δὲ μπορεῖ νὰ ἀποτελέσει πρόσφορο ἔδαφος γιὰ νὰ καρποφορήσει ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, κι αὐτὸ εἶναι μία μεγάλη ἀδικία ποὺ ἐπιτελεῖ ὁ ἀνθρωπος στὸν ἑαυτό του. Εἶναι εὔλογο νὰ ἀναρωτηθεῖ κανεὶς γιὰ τὸ ἐὰν ἀξίζει τελικά νὰ κοπιάσει ὁ ἀνθρωπος νὰ κάνει τὴν ψυχή του γῆ εὔφορη, καὶ ἐὰν ὄντως ἀξίζει, γιὰ ποιὸ λόγο δὲν τὸ ἐπιτυγχάνει.

Τὸ πρῶτο ἐρώτημα βρίσκει τὴν ἀπάντησή του στὸν λόγο γιὰ τὸν ὅποιον ὁ ἀνθρωπος δημιουργήθηκε: «Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ήμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὅμοιώσιν» (Γεν. 1:26). "Ἐτοι ὁ Θεὸς ἔδωσε στὸν ἀνθρωπὸ δικά Του χαρακτηριστικά. Ἡ αἵτια αὐτοῦ τοῦ δώρου εἶναι ἡ ἀγάπη Του. Ὁ Θεὸς δὲν τὸ ἔκανε αὐτὸ ἀπὸ ἀνάγκη, καθὼς ὁ σκοπός Του εἶναι νὰ καταστήσει τὸν ἀνθρωπὸ συνεργὸ τοῦ ἔργου τῆς δημιουργίας, ἀναθέτοντάς του νὰ φέρει μέρος τῶν ἴδιοτήτων καὶ δυνάμεων τοῦ Θεοῦ στὸν κόσμο. Καθὼς κανεὶς δὲν εἶναι ἀνώτερος καὶ καλύτερος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡ ἔνωση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μαζὶ Του, μέσω τῆς καλλιέρ- γειας καὶ καρποφορίας τοῦ λόγου Του, εἶναι ἡ ὑψιστὴ κατάσταση καὶ πηγὴ εύτυχίας γιὰ τὸν ἀνθρωπὸ. Ὄποιαδήποτε ἄλλη κατάσταση ἡ ἄλλο ἐπίτευγμα ὀδηγεῖ τὸν ἀνθρωπὸ σὲ κάτι κατώτερο ἀπὸ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν ἑαυτό του. Ἡ ἐπιστήμη μᾶς ἀποδεικνύει ὅτι ὁ ἀνθρωπος προσπαθεῖ μὲν νὰ δημιουργήσει πράγματα «έκ τοῦ μηδενός», ἀσκώντας ὅμως τὰ χαρίσματα τοῦ Θεοῦ, χρησιμοποιώντας δηλαδὴ δυνάμεις τῆς δημιουργίας. "Αν αὐτὰ τὰ ἐπιτεύγματα τὰ θεωρήσει ὡς πηγές καταξίωσης του, καὶ ἀν ἔξαρτήσει ἀπὸ αὐτὰ τὰ χαρίσματά του, τότε ὁ ἀνθρωπὸς αὐταπατᾶται καὶ γίνεται δοῦλος τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ του. Μὲ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο δὲν ἀνέρχεται σὲ κάποια ἀνώτερη κατάσταση καὶ δὲν ὀδεύει σὲ καμία δόξα. Τούναντίον, ξεπέ- φτει καὶ μοιραία χάνει αὐτὲς τὶς θείες ἴδιότητες ποὺ τὸν κάνουν ξεχωριστὸ καὶ ἀνώτερο δλου τοῦ φυσικοῦ κόσμου.

Εἶναι λοιπὸν ἀπορίας ἀξιον γιατὶ καὶ πῶς ὁ ἀνθρωπὸς καταδικάζει τὸν ἑαυτό του νὰ ζεῖ μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό. Ἡ πρώτη καὶ βασικὴ αἵτια εἶναι ὅτι ὁ ἀνθρωπος, βλέποντας τὴν δύναμη του μέσα στὸν κόσμο, τὴν παρεμμηνεύει καὶ ἔτσι μεγαλοποιεῖ τὸν ἑαυτό του. "Ἐτοι παραμελεῖ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀποφεύγει νὰ ἀναρωτηθεῖ γιὰ τὴν πηγὴ αὐτῆς τῆς δύναμης. Προσπαθεῖ νὰ ἀπολαύσει ὅτι αὐτὴ μπορεῖ νὰ τοῦ προσφέρει καὶ ἔτσι χάνεται σὲ αὐτὴν τὴν ἀπόλαυση. "Ενας ἀκόμη λόγος ὁ ὅποιος ὠθεῖ τὸν ἀνθρωπὸ πρὸς τὴν ἀρνηση, εἶναι ὁ φόβος μπροστὰ στὸ ἄγνωστο: ἡ ἀδυναμία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου νὰ εἶναι πλήρης γνώστης τῶν πραγμάτων. Ἡ ἔλλειψη τῆς ἱκανότητας νὰ κατανοεῖ καὶ νὰ ἐλέγχει μὲ τὴ λογική του τὰ πάντα τὸν γεμίζει φόβο καὶ ἀμφιβολία γιὰ τὰ πάντα, ἀκόμη καὶ γιὰ τὸ πλέον ὀφθαλμοφανές; τὴν ἀξία του. Παραπαίοντας ἀνάμεσα στὸν ἀβάσταχτο πόνο μπροστὰ στὸ ἄγνωστο καὶ στὴν ἀνάγκη τῆς παρηγοριᾶς, κλείνει ἐκούσια τὰ μάτια στὸν Θεό καὶ παραδίδεται στὴν παρα- μυθία τοῦ ἐγώισμοῦ.

Δίκαια κάποιος θὰ μποροῦσε νὰ ἰσχυριστεῖ ὅτι οἱ δύο ἀνωτέρω λόγοι ἀλληλοσυγκρούονται καὶ ἀλληλοακυρώνονται. Αὐτὸ θα ἥταν ἀλήθεια, ἀν ἡ δύναμη τοῦ ἀνθρώπου προερχό- ταν ἀπὸ τὴν ἴδια πηγὴ ἀπὸ ὅπου ἔρχεται ὁ φόβος του. Ἡ μὲν δύναμη του προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὴν χρήση δλων τῶν δώρων τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ ὅποια συντελοῦν στὴν δημιουργικότητα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἐνῶ ὁ φόβος του προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὸ δτὶ δλα τὰ θέλει νὰ χωροῦν στὴν δική του μόνον κατανόηση καὶ γνώση. Καθὼς οἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀκόμη καὶ αὐτὲς ποὺ ἔχουν ἐκχωρηθεῖ στὸν ἀνθρωπὸ, δὲν ἐμπίπτουν στὴν σφαίρα τῆς ἀνθρώπινης νόησης καὶ γνώσης, ὁ ἀνθρωπὸς «ταράζεται» ὑπαρξιακὰ ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τὴν ἀδυναμία νὰ «χωρέσει» τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ

Θεοῦ στὸν νοῦ του καὶ ὁδηγεῖται στὸ φόβο, στὴν ἄρνηση, στὸν ἐγωισμὸ καὶ στὴν πλάνη.

‘Ο Κύριος στὴν παραβολὴ τοῦ Σπορέως προσκαλεῖ ὅποιον μετέχει στὴν ἐμπειρία τοῦ θείου λόγου νὰ ἐργάζεται ἐπίπονα καὶ σὲ συνεργία μὲ τὶς δωρεὲς τῆς θείας Χάριτος, τὶς δυνάμεις ποὺ προσφέρει ὁ Θεὸς στὸν ἀνθρωπὸ γιὰ νὰ ἐπιτελέσει τὸ δικό Του ἔργο. Ἔτσι μόνον μπορεῖ νὰ ὁδηγηθεῖ στὴ ἀληθινὴ γνώση καὶ κατανόηση τῆς ἀποστολῆς του, δηλαδὴ τὴν συμβολὴ του στὴν φροντίδα καὶ τελείωση ὅλης τῆς δημιουργίας. Ὁ τρόπος μὲ τὸν ὅποιον ἡ θεία δύναμη καὶ ἀνθρώπινη προσπάθεια συνεργάζονται δὲν εἶναι ἄλλος παρὰ ἡ πίστη καὶ προσευχή. Ὄταν ἐμεῖς ξεκινήσουμε, Ἐκεῖνος ἀναλαμβάνει τὸ μεγαλύτερο μέρος τῆς συνέχειας, ὥστε νὰ χαροῦμε καὶ νὰ βιώσουμε ὑπαρξιακὰ τὸ κατ’ εἰκόνα Του, ἀλλὰ καὶ νὰ ἐπιτύχουμε τὸ καθ’ ὄμοιώσιν Του. Ἀμήν.

Πρωτοπρεσβ. Ἰωακείμ Ούρεϊλίδης

SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

In today's Gospel, we hear a familiar parable from Christ: that of the Sower who went to sow his seed. As we know, the seed which he scatters falls on four different areas of ground: one quarter falls on a hard path and gets eaten by birds, one quarter falls on dry ground and withers for lack of moisture, one quarter falls on soil but is choked by the weeds in it, and one quarter falls on good soil which allows it to grow to maturity and bear fruit.

When the disciples ask Christ the meaning of the parable, he explains to them that the Sower represents Christ, the seed represents the Word of God, and the ground represents the different types of human hearts that it finds. What is interesting is that Christ sows his seed indiscriminately. He scatters it everywhere. In other words, he wants everyone to be saved. But who gets saved and who does not depends on the disposition of each person's heart.

Also, out of all the seed that lands on the ground, only one quarter finds good soil. That means that out of all the people to hear the Word of God, only the minority are well disposed enough to accept it and allow it to grow in their hearts. The vast majority are so ill disposed towards Christ, that his teachings bear no fruit. His words, unfortunately, fall on deaf ears.

The message, therefore, in this parable is a very clear one: we can try to hear the Word of God all we want. But if we are not well disposed towards Christ, it will all be in vain. We have to first prepare our hearts by making them the opposite of the types of ground that were bad for the seed. Unlike the hard path (which represents those whose hearts are downtrodden by the harshness of life and are therefore hard-hearted), we must not allow life to harden our hearts and make them bitter. Unlike the dry ground (which represents those whose hearts lack the presence of the Holy Spirit), we must open our hearts and allow the Holy Spirit to saturate them fully. And finally, unlike the soil with the weeds (which represents those who do have the Holy Spirit in them, but who also nurture the worries and pleasures of life alongside it), we must stay focused on Christ, and extract from our hearts anything that distract us from him.

All this, of course, can seem difficult and quite a colossal task. But, as Christ said, what is impossible for man is possible for God. Therefore, we must never stop seeking his help in developing our heart to make it more and more receptive towards his holy Word. And God, seeing our desire for such a good thing, will surely not allow our efforts to go in vain.

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