

**Do Not Lay Up For Yourselves, Treasures On Earth.
First Sunday of The Great Lent – Treasures Sunday.
February 18, 2018**

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit one God. Amen.

During the holy fasting, we taste more clearly the grace of the kingdom of God within us.

During fasting, abstaining from food and drink is a step in order to live as if we are not of the world.

To live the perfect life, is to live without food or drink. But then how do we live? We live by the spirit, and then we start tasting the kingdom of God, as Jesus said: "For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (1), it is the eternal Kingdom.

Readings for the fasting period, as was arranged by the Fathers, they selected a part of the Sermon on the Mount of our Lord, as the main reading for the first Sunday of fasting. It is on renouncing bodily matters, greatly preoccupying the mind of humans, that is: food, drink and earthly possessions.

Human concerns are to grow up, get to maturity, getting educated to work and to bring an income. Fasting is 'change of direction'; means that a person changes his/her direction; taking a different way, focussing on the Kingdom of God.

The start of the gospel is: "Do not lay up for yourselves, treasures on earth," (2). Why? He says: 'because you are heavenly', 'the earthly, all their hope and aim is in the dust'. 'I am going to transform you from earth to heaven', 'You are heavenly'.

What are the earthly treasures? It is what the people are boasting about. It is about what the people relies on.

The nerve (cornerstone) which the world builds on its economy is money; He said: 'you are not from the world, if you were from the world, the world would have loved you" (3). But change your direction towards matter which lasts, the better one. What are those earthly treasures?

Look how many human generations are we now on earth? So many, billions of people lived on the surface of the earth. Everyone got in his/her mind to store, to treasure, they feel when they treasure, collect, and increase, in his/her self that their ego is puffed up and that he/she has got something to lean on. As the people's talk is saying, 'I am keeping something for the future, for life circumstances', 'I don't know, what it (the world) would be bringing on'. 'I am keeping something aside to lean on'.

Jesus today is saying in the gospel: 'these [treasures] are something not to be leaned on. Are you going to lean on an unsafe wall? It is exposed to robbers. Of course you hear many stories; as long as there is a treasure, there will be some greedy people and thieves. There were some people who were storing a lot and when they come back to it, they found it frayed while being stored. The gospel saying: "where moth and rust destroy". Then, what are these treasures? Is it to be relied on?

Most of those who are treasuring millions, they get a strange surprise call that 'you are leaving (the world) today'. Do you remember the story which Jesus told us about "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully."(4); the world was very bright in his eyes.

He thought within himself, "I will pull down my barns and build greater, there I will store all my crops and my goods." And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'
Luk 12:18-20.

In the book of ecclesiastics: 'so poor are the people, who stores a lot and works extremely hard storing, and they don't know when he dies'. It may be inherited by siblings who will waste it on things. This money was collected with a lot of hard work, but when it is inherited, it is wasted and they behave very foolishly. This is why Jesus said: 'to whom are you leaving this money?' 'To whom are you leaving the treasures for?'

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth", instead in heaven, because you are heavenly, your final destination is heaven, your last station. Don't let these matters occupies you and consumes your life. Then what should I do? He said: 'you are but a traveller, and you'll arrive to your destination rejoicing'. Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. There are no thieves in heaven and there is no moth to consume it; and there is no waste.

I will tell you a better way; every deposit you deposit in heaven; is similar to a bank deposit and withdrawal. Every time you deposit in the heavenly bank, it is registered under your name and it will not be wasted.

This is why I'm saying to you; it is a human nature, to own and to save. It is a natural habit in us as human beings. The promise of Jesus: 'whatever you deposit, I will multiply it to you; for example by a million time. If you put a little thing; like sometimes I will give that two mates of the widow, Jesus would say don't worry I am going to multiply your balance by an immeasurable number.

How much you got in heaven? I ought to examine myself and say what have I done? I have done very little. There are some people who did unimaginable acts [of charity].

I read on the web; some people went and visited one of the fathers in Mount of Athos in Greece; an elderly man, advanced in age, a disciple of father Paisios, and asked him: give us a word of benefit? The old man, got up slowly and went to the cell he lives in, and brought back an image which written on it: ' ... for I was hungry and you gave Me food, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' (5); the image was an image of a bigger. He said to them: go and learn from this example if you need a word of benefit. The writer, is saying, by the time we organised a (second) visit in a about year for some 15 persons, we went to visit him, but we found that the elderly monk departed.

What's the story of this Monk? it was said that he attended the Second World War in the 40s. After the war, he distributed all his wealth to the poor, and he came up with a very nice idea; he put on very humble clothing and went to the city of Sophia about 10 km away. He built for himself a small hut and worked as a bigger. He begged during the day, and went to orphanages and the sick and the and the poor, to give them whatever he collected; he only kept for himself, a little to feed himself. He continue doing that for 60 years, to beg for the poor, accepting to live very poor to serve Lord Jesus Christ. Got nothing, as bigger; got nothing for to his advantage.

I said to myself O'lord, how is this? What an amazing words these are? What is this enormous power to push the human being to this unbelievable act? Superior act for over 60 years. He died when he was 103 years old, and to the last minute he used to walk all this distance while he has at an age of a 100 year to beg, and to give (to the needy).

You tell me how, his treasure in heaven will look like?

We would have in heaven strange surprises, people who has a huge treasure. We will go to heaven and will find people who are enormously rich, and you find poor people as well. This is why Jesus's words need to be taken seriously, need to be taken properly.

Be warned of earthly treasures because we are not going to take it with us, anything, you're not going to take anything from it. It is not going to benefit you at all with anything; be alert, turn this earthly balance, to a live heavenly one, heavily active balance. Lay treasure, keep saving: " ... make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home."(6)

There are enormous opportunities in front of us, but the days are slipping away from us. It is possible for a person to transfer to heaven and to have a huge treasure, and it is possible that he can get lazy and hasn't got an acceptable balance in heaven.

As for bodily matters, our Lord Jesus spoke about it in the gospel regarding food and drink and clothing, these are bodily concerns; when he said 'you are heavenly', 'you are spiritual'. This body the very small tiny amount will satisfy it. There are people who are very poor and their body is alive; and there are some people who are dressed very simply, and they are covered (shielded). And you, may feed the body, spending 500 dollars for one meal. And it is possible with (fava) beans for few cents, you can feed the body. It is for the wise to look into that; you give the body so much. It takes the whole life, and it will never be satisfied. Or to give it the little of the little and it will live. It's up to you.

It is evident that our saintly fathers did not care much about their bodies. In our church's history tens of thousands; while they were young, they went to the mountains; and who is going to look after you? They neglected the body as if they are just renting the body (for a short while), in fasting in prayers and in staying long nights and suffering.

I remember once in the Monastery of Amba Bishoy, long time, over 50 years ago, I found a father in between the fathers; that Monastery had about five or six of elderly fathers; a father maybe over 90 years old, he was carrying a can of water going towards the cell he is living in. I didn't know what he's doing with the water. I ran as a young man, behind him to take from him the can of water to carry it in instead of him; he asked me: what are you doing? I said to help. He said: leave me alone brother. What sort of assistance? He offered all his life; he doesn't need anyone to help, or not to help, I mean he is serving himself. This is a program (spiritual program).

They offered themselves, their bodies, the most amazing thing is that a lot of them, lived a long life like Saint Anthony , who lived 105 years. It may have seemed that they are taking down [dismantling] their bodies, but it seems they were building. Their lives became much sweeter, the interior joy covered up sufferings of the body. The Grace they have obtained by very many fasting; things they conquer the world and they conquer the body.

That's why Lord Jesus said: 'do not be very concerned about the body. Don't keep all your concern about the body what to eat, to drink, to dress up or what to drink, go to the interior, and ask yourself: what are your interior dress?

"For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ." (7), you have put on Christ, get into the interior and taste for yourself the heavenly food of the eternal life. The Lord said, 'am I not looking after the lilies of the Field? Arn't you better than them? Didn't I look after the birds of the air, it doesn't plant or harvest or store in stores? I am looking after it? Aren't you better?(8)

Definitely Lord, we are better. Let us stop worrying about he earthly matters, which is definitely will end, let us not worry about that. Be concerned about our interior life. What is the end of decorating the body, even the person when he grows older, even his shape looks tired no matter what amount of beautification (we put on), the body will be finishing.

What are you dressed in the interior? What do you look like? The perfume of Jesus is inside you, be concerned about the interior, "Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day." through fasting prayer and communion. If man's eyes is looking for the earthly, to collect treasures, the heavenly their eyes are fixed to heaven, to collect treasures for the everlasting life.

To our Lord, the glory forever. Amen.

Bible References:

1. Luk 17:21 “nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”
2. Luk 12:19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal”
3. Jn 15:18 “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”.
4. Luk 12:16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ 18 So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’ 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’. 21 “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.
5. Mt 25: 34-40: Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. 37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’
6. Luk: 16:9 ,“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.”
7. Gal 3:27: “For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.”
8. Mt 6:26 “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”
9. 2Co 4:16: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.”