

"What shall I do?"

The question of the rich man is answered by the Apostle - make manifest all goodness and righteousness and truth, and in so doing, become light.

Ephesians 5:9-19 : Luke 12:16-21

2017-12-03

SYNOPSIS: What shall I do? That was the question of the rich man who had a great harvest. The Scripture talks about "what we should do" today, in both the Epistle and the Gospel. They mention an incredible gift and incredible privilege. The Apostle Paul especially shows the greatest motivation a man can have for knowing what to do and doing it - that we can become "all goodness and righteousness and truth", and in making manifest these things, become light - that is, be united with God and be perfected.

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

"What shall I do?" That was the question of the rich man who had a great harvest. There are a lot of things to do every day: work, household tasks, shopping, and the list goes on and on.

But, how much do we do that that *really matters*? It's not so much what we do that makes something matter, is why we do it and how we do it. There's only one thing that matters in life; we were born for it and everything we do should accomplish it.

The Scripture talks about this thing today, in both the Epistle and the Gospel. The Apostle Paul tells us this in a positive way by telling us to "Redeem the time". The parable about the rich man's harvest tells us by showing us what not to do, and that is to not think within ourselves only.

What you really want out of life? Most people don't know. Or if they think they know, they want the wrong things. Fundamentally, even if we are misguided in the things we seek, and the way we spend our time, every human being wants to be happy, at peace, be loved.

So I ask you again, what you really want out of life? Your answer should have *nothing* to do with your job or your spouse, or your children, or your financial situation or your health.

There's only one thing that matters. The Apostle mentions it at the beginning of the Epistle: "goodness and righteousness and truth" -- which are only possible if we manifest the fruits of the spirit.

We were created to be good, because God is good, and to be righteous because God is righteous, and to live according to truth because God is truth.

We were made to be like God, and therefore anything we do that is like God is "redeeming the time". Anything we do that is not like God is, as the Apostle puts it: "unfruitful works of darkness".

Both the Epistle and the Gospel today talk of an incredible gift and incredible privilege. The parable speaks of a plentiful harvest which the rich man could have used to "redeem the time" by giving to the poor. He did not think in a spiritual way, as the parable says, he "thought within himself" and not about God or about others. He lost his opportunity to "redeem the time".

The Apostle tells us of another incredible gift and incredible privilege, but not as blatantly as the parable. Did you catch it? I had to read it a couple times in order to see.

Remember we are made in the image of God and our calling is to obtain His likeness. Nothing else matters in life. In fact one can say there is nothing that is alive except God, so everything else we do is death, not life -- if it is not redeeming the time.

There are things in life we should do and things in life we should not do and we understand those things we should not do as sins. Much of the Scripture tells us to avoid sin, but telling somebody to not do something never works -- unless we understand why.

The Apostle tells us why.

It is in the middle of a sharp rebuke, where he tells us to have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness", and then he says something amazing.

He saying this to sinners, because you and I are sinners, and yet his words are true. I tell you honestly: this is why I try to do good, this is why I am a priest -- despite my sins -- because of what the Apostle says here.

He says it almost parenthetically as an afterthought, as if everybody should know this. Unfortunately in this life, very few people know this. He says: "all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light:" and then he casually says: "for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."

What is this thing he is referring to that makes manifest the light?

We are called to do good works and to shine forth the light of God in our life. Everyone intuitively knows this unless they convince themselves otherwise by some sort of sectarian theology.

Have you felt ashamed of being lazy when you're around someone who is industrious? Or remembered how prideful you are when you're around someone who is humble and quiet? Or perhaps you felt shame that you get angry so easily when you're around someone who is always calm and never curses or swears?

This is because their virtues are making manifest to you your lack of virtue.

We are called to do this. The Apostle says for "whatsoever doth make manifest is light". He's not only referring to God here, but also to us. He is basically saying that we can become light, we can become like God.

The intelligent man knows that within himself is much darkness, but that same man knows that we are called to be light. What an incredible privilege this is!

We have received so many gifts, both material and spiritual. Do we recognize this?

Our greatest gift is that we are made in the image of God to become like God.

Along with this gift is the ability to fulfill our purpose through baptism and struggling to live the commandments in the church, absolutely surrounded by the grace of God, inside and out.

Many of us have material gifts: our health or some wealth or intelligence or the ability to do some things. One can think of these material gifts as the harvest of the rich man. The rich man thought of his harvest only in a physical way. That is why the parable says he thought within himself. We are to never think within ourselves since God should always be with us and we should always be thinking with God.

The person who thinks with God will take all of his gifts that are given to him and think of how he may “redeem the time” with them.

Remember what the greatest gift is. We are made in the image of God and we are called to be in His likeness. The Apostle speaks of this when he says “that which makes manifest is light”. *To be “light” is to obtain the likeness of God.*

This is the greatest motivation for a human being to do good. He does good because God has called him to be good and be righteous to be at peace and be truth. He is called to partake of the light of God, Who is light.

And this calling is sure and true even though many times we do not act like we have this calling. God never takes it away from us, no matter what we do. Of course if we do not attempt to live according to this calling we will not achieve it. The rich man had gifts and didn't achieve anything. We have great gifts -- and what are we going to achieve?

Let's look at the exhortation of the Apostle in this light: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”.

The will of the Lord is that within us will be all "goodness and righteousness and truth". We are becoming light, that is the best reason to "walk circumspectly" and "redeem the time".

That should be only thing on your "to do" list today. We should not need to ask what should we do, as the rich man asked.

We should know what we should do -- we are called to be all goodness and righteousness and truth, and we achieve this by the grace of God -- despite our sins -- and by thinking spiritually and never within ourselves.

I always try to tell you something practical, and so here it is. In the light of the great gifts that God is given us and our great calling, which we will always have no matter whether we follow it or not, let us think of the question "what shall I do?".

It is good when you have many things to do in a day to make up a so-called "to do" list. I make them up all the time, and unfortunately sometimes I think I should call them my "to not do list" because so many of the things that I write down I don't get done. But I can tell you one thing that I always do, and I don't even write it down, because it's patently obvious that I should do it.

I am begging you to make this the first thing on your "to do" list -- so obvious that you don't even need to write it down.

You should pray.

You should pray for the forgiveness of your sins.

You should pray for others.

You should thank God that He is giving you great gifts and beg Him that you would use these gifts in a way that would "redeem the time".

I've recently been reading a book of sermons by Patriarch Pavle. I think quoting a little bit from him will be a good way to end this short exhortation.

On the day of his consecration to the episcopacy he said the following:

"May our first thought, at the start of each new day, and the start of each of our labors, be the remembrance of God. And may our first word, at the start of each day, and at the start of each of our labors, be a word to the glory and praise of Him, one God in Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "

"...And may our last thought, at the end of each day, at the end of each of our labors, be the remembrance of God. And may our last word, brothers and sisters, at the end of each day, at the end of each of our labors, at the end of all of our conversations and our whole life, be: "Lord, glory and praise be to Thee for all things!"

He also uttered this prayer in the same address:

"Lord, glory to Thee! Lord, help! Lord, bless! Glory to Thee! For glory begins belongs to Thee alone, to Thy greatness alone, to Thy wisdom and Thy justice, but above all to Thy endless goodness, our Father! On account of it, we put our hope also in thy help without which we know not and cannot begin anything good; we also put our hope in Thy blessings without which all our effort and work will be nothing more than building a house upon the sand, which will be destroyed as soon as the first rain descends, and the rivers flood, and the winds start blowing."

If you listened carefully to the Gospel today, and to the Patriarch's words and his prayer, you will know exactly what the answer to the question is -- "what shall I do?"

Every day, every moment, we must give thanks to God for His great gifts and we must struggle to "redeem the time" with those gifts. Let your first action, your most fervent action of the day -- be that you pray.

Glory be to God for all things. Amen.

The Scripture read today, the 26th Sunday after Pentecost, November 3/20, 2017:

Ephesians 5:9-19 ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. ¹² For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. ¹⁴ Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. ¹⁵ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, ¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹ Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Luke 12:16-21 ¹⁶ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. ²⁰ But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night

thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.