



My Beloved Ones,

This week we have begun our 40 day fasting period in preparation for “The Winter Pascha”, which is the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Next Thursday, we will gather to celebrate with our family and friends that beautiful secular holiday known as Thanksgiving.

How appropriate it is then, that this Sunday’s Gospel tells a parable about the importance of Thanksgiving. In this parable Christ tells us of a Rich Man whose land brought forth a crop so large, this man considered tearing down and rebuilding his barns in order to store his bounty.

The Man reasoned that having stored up his provisions, he would then be entitled rest and pleasure, telling his soul, *“Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry”* (Luke 12:19).

As Orthodox Christians, we are all familiar with what happened next. God rebuked the man, telling him, *“Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”* (Luke 12:20).

Christ’s message therefore is clear: *“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* (Luke 12:21).

My brothers and sisters, the Gospel does not say whether this Rich Man committed any grave sin in his work acquiring the field; it provides no details of how he treated his laborers. Indeed, according to human understanding, the Man seems wise for having come up with a plan to store his crops for a later date. He is by all accounts a “good” person.

But if he is good, he is only so in an earthly sense. For in spite of his common sense, he ultimately flatters himself by thinking that his work is finished. As all good Christians know *“...every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...”* (James 1:17). For all his positive qualities he forgets the most crucial: a humble and thankful heart.

As we approach what our society refers to as “the holiday season” we should do well to hold fast to this lesson that the Church Fathers have given to us on the first Sunday of the Nativity Fast: wealth, is in itself not an evil; so long as we remember who provided us with the gifts and the resources to sow and reap plentifully.

During this season of mercy and love, let us imitate the charity of a God who so loved His creation that He took on flesh for our sake. As the Gospel says, our riches and goods will outlive us. What matters most then, is how we will use these God-given gifts to imitate Him. By clothing the naked and feeding the hungry we are use are blessings in such a way as to bless others, imitating, and ultimately giving praise to our Most Gracious Creator.

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