

## 9th Sunday of Luke: 'A Fierce Condemnation of Greed' (Protopresbyter Nikolaos Patsalos)

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The ninth Sunday of Saint Luke and the Gospel reading again revolves around the great temptation of the misuse of wealth. The parable of the foolish rich man is well-known and, at the same time, of enduring interest to everyone, not only to those who have a lot of money.

The man mentioned in the Gospel today was so rich that he didn't have room to store all his wealth and goods. It appears that his sole interest in life was to acquire more and more goods. He was the type of man who, instead of being in love with the beauty of life, was someone with a life-long passion for an abundance of material goods. The poor man was under the illusion that, by hoarding wealth, he was storing up happiness.



This kind of concern really is a sickness. In other words, it's an erosion of the soul

because of which, instead of people working in order to live a decent life, they live and work in order to make profits. The rich man in the Gospel isn't merely rich; he's completely devoted to and absorbed in how to become even richer. He's the personification of a person whose sole interest is money and worldly goods.

The question is: to what extent does this way of thinking satisfy the minds of people today? Obviously, the Gospel refers to riches in a number of places, but what's condemned isn't the possession of wealth itself, but the way in which it's used. According to the logic of the Gospel, it's a considerable trial to be rich. If your wealth is a source of joy for your neighbour, then you can be called rich in Christ. But if your riches are purely and simply there to serve your own selfish needs, so that you can eat and drink to your heart's content, then, as far as the Gospel is concerned, you're avaricious and that's all there is to it.

Greed and avarice are terrible passions. In monasticism, one of the three life-long promises is not to possess anything. In other words, the rejection of and severance from all earthly possessions so as to be able to acquire possession of heaven. Outside monasticism, this is put into practice by developing a healthy relationship to material goods and money. Our aim should not be how to become rich on earth by piling up riches, but how to cover our necessary earthly needs. And it's certainly true that people can live respectable lives with only a few, simple things. What makes it difficult to understand this truth is the manic consumerism of modern culture, which, instead of simplifying our lives makes them ever more complicated.

The outlook of the foolish rich man never changed, because riches and an abundance of goods become the aim of life in themselves. We'll be seeing the truth of this in a few days, as we approach Christmas. The only thing that today's modern world will highlight is the consumerism associated with Christmas: the food, the gifts, the sparkling decorations and all the other subsidiary aspects of the feast of the nativity of the Incarnate Lord. So, although, it's an event which, as true Christians we should experience mystically and simply, our warped outlook wants us to celebrate it like the 'foolish rich man', that is with abundance. The Gospel, however, pours scorn on greed as an attitude and way of life and promotes the virtue of simplicity and the golden mean so that we have the opportunity to experience the true riches of God.