

Last Judgement (Mat. 25, 31- 46) (Metropolitan Anthony Bloom)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Today's parable is so familiar to us that we may well not even notice its message. And it speaks to us of two things.

It reminds us of the fact that a day will come when we will stand face to face with the Living God, and then judgment will come upon us. Not that God waits for us to judge and condemn our evil deeds; but when we will stand before God Who is all beauty, and discover how we have made ugly His image in us, when we will stand before God Who has loved us so much and realise how little love we have given Him – will that not be a judgment?



This happens also in our earthly relations. At times we discover that someone loved us so deeply, so truly, and we took everything that was given us — all the love, all the warmth, all the tenderness, all the care, all the sacrifices, that we accepted the life of the person who was day after day renouncing himself or herself for our sake, without responding, taking for granted that the love that was offered us was our due, our right. And then one day comes when this person dies, and we realise that we have taken, taken ceaselessly, and never given a sign of recognition, never made this person feel that we understood how deeply, truly, generously we were loved.

And then, we are face to face with an ultimate judgment about ourselves: too late, too late!.. O, the person who has loved us has forgiven us all along, and now in eternity this person says before God the words which Christ said as He has been crucified: Father! Forgive! They did not know what they were doing... But how painful the judgment is, our judgment upon ourselves, the sense that we could have made the loving one so happy — and we have not done it.

This is a judgment much more severe than any court of justice, something that will and should hit us day after day more directly at the heart of hearts than any formal condemnation. It is not according to our faithfulness to commandments, it is according to whether we have learned to love that we will be judged.

And today's parable speaks of it so clearly. God does not ask us anything that is

beyond human capabilities. Have you felt any compassion on the hungry and the thirsty? Have you felt any compassion on the homeless? When someone was taken a prisoner — have you felt heartbroken for him? Indeed, have you not shrunk away from the shame of being recognised as his friend? Or the fear of being involved together with him — or her — in the same condemnation?.. And so many ways in which compassion, sympathy, love could be expressed.

And what Christ says to us is, in substance, ‘Have you been human at all — or not? Have you been capable of sympathy, of compassion, of solidarity? Have you been brothers and sisters to those who were around you? If you have, you are as it were ready to be filled with new life; but you have not even been human — how can you expect to be made partakers of the Divine nature?’ It is only if we are like a diamond that we can be filled with the light and shine with this light, reflecting it in all directions; but if we are not, how can we reflect anything?

You remember Christ’s words that if our eye is blind, everything is darkness around us; if our heart is blind, and deaf, and dead — everything is dead, and silent with the silence of death, and dark with the darkness of absence around us.

But to be truly human, we must learn to be also in communion with the One Who is the Only One Who can communicate to our hearts, and our minds, and our lives true love, the fullness of it, true compassion: Christ, Who has come into the world to save us. And as long as we are separated from Him, we can, on a very low level, be sympathetic, and friendly, and gentle; but we know not yet what it means to love, to love with all our being, with life and death, with everything there is in us, and indeed with more than there is in us: with God’s own love abroad in our hearts, God’s vision in our eyes, God’s sacrificial gift of self in our own selves.

And this is why St. John of the Ladder, Saint John Climacus says, ‘We shall not be judged on whether we performed miracles or whether we attained visions; but we will be judged because we have never cried of our separation from God’. We do not even perceive it truly, because we are so used to the distance there is between Him and us; we do not even realise how far we are, how poor we are.

And from time to time, I think, it is good to be reminded of someone who touched the hem of the robe of Christ, and who never, never could forget what he perceived then. I wish to read to you a few lines from the writings of Starets Silouane. Starets Silouane says that one day God came close, close to him, and he could never forget it. And speaking of himself and of Adam, the father of all mankind, who in paradise knew the sweetness of the love of God, he says:

“Adam pined on earth, and wept bitterly, and the earth was not pleasing to him any more. He was heartsick for God, and this was his cry: My soul wearies for the Lord, and I seek Him in tears. How should I not seek Him? When I was with Him my soul was glad and at rest, and the enemy could not come near me... Where art Thou, O Lord? Where art Thou, my Light? Why hast Thou hidden Thy face from me? Long is it since my soul beheld Thee, and she wearies after Thee and seeks Thee in tears. Where is my Lord? Why is it that my soul sees Him not? What hinders Him from dwelling in me? This hinders Him: Christ-like humility and love for my enemies are not in me. I have lost, like Adam, divine grace, and with Him I call: Be merciful unto me, O Lord! Bestow on me the spirit of humility and love. O love of the Lord! He who has known Thee seeks Thee, tireless, day and night, crying with a loud voice: I pine for Thee, O Lord, and seek Thee in tears. How should I not seek Thee? Thou didst give me to know Thee by the Holy Spirit, and in her knowing of God my soul is drawn to seek Thee in tears”.

Here is a man, like us, a simple Russian peasant who had known the closeness of God and felt an orphan on earth without it.

Let us reflect on this, let us reflect, because each of us, at blessed moments, has known the closeness of God. But how easily we are content with being alone in the cold world like everyone else!.. And we are not called to be like everyone else — we are called to be God’s own presence shining through us. So, let that light shine within us that people give glory to our Father Who is in Heaven. Amen.

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