

The Twenty Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 12:16-21

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 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. 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. 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? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (KJV)

The present Gospel is a vivid reminder of the fragility of life. The importance of always caring for the soul is very clear. We never know when our last breath will be taken.

We never know when our earthly life will end. We have statistics about the length of life expectancy. Statistics do not answer for the duration of life for each person.

Too often accidents occur and take the life of someone very young. The coronavirus is claiming lives daily. Unexpected events occur and change life expectancies.

The modern world has placed great emphasis on the accumulation of material wealth. The present Gospel highlights the rich man's desire to build more barns to hold his increased goods.

The rich man in the present Gospel had his life brought to an abrupt end. His material wealth would be of no use to him. Had he shared his wealth with the poor and needy, the judgment of his soul would have been different.

The rich man treasured material goods. No mention was made of him having compassion, interest or concern for individuals suffering in his community. His vision was narrow and self-centered.

Christians are to love God and the people in daily life. (1Jn 4:20) Believers are to care for the soul with utmost fervor. St. Mark's Gospel says: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall **gain the whole world**, and lose his own soul?" (Mk.8:36)

The Nativity Fast is underway in the Church. This is the time to prayerfully prepare for the Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ. The meaning of Jesus Christ taking on human flesh merits our thoughts throughout this period.

Now is the time for our lives to be transformed and increase in likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ took on flesh in humble circumstances. He did not live an ostentatious life with excess of luxury and material possessions.

Jesus' manor of dress and mode of transportation were not known to be significantly different than the most common people of the time. Today is a day to evaluate our personal desires and material interests.

Today is the day to assess the amount of effort we put into caring for our souls. Let us ask ourselves if we really need all that we have. Do we have goods and wealth that we can share with the needy known to us?

Many people are suffering today. Suffering has increased significantly during this virus. People have lost good jobs. Workers in unexpected places are experiencing great stress.

Let us look at our souls during this Nativity Fast and determine if we truly love our neighbor. Let us think about the content of our prayers and frequency of our prayers.

The final judgement will look at what we have done with the wealth and talents we have acquired and the way we have put them to use. Have we been generous to God and our neighbor?

Do we seek to build bigger homes while people in our community are homeless? Do we buy more cars than we can drive while people are unable to work because they lack transportation?

Are we getting bigger cupboards and freezers for our food while neighbors are going hungry? What defense will we have before the Lord about the way we handle our income toward God and neighbor?

Each day is an opportunity to invest in the Kingdom of God. The way we use our material wealth, time and talents will determine the way we experience eternity.

The rich man had more material goods than he could handle at the time. Before he could build bigger barns, his life was going to end. The material goods he cherished would go to someone else.

Each moment of life is precious. Moments of life are not retrievable. We cannot reuse them or reclaim them. Moments of life are to be used wisely. They are to be invested in the Kingdom of God.

The time we have here on earth determines where we experience eternity. Adhering to the Nativity Fast is consistent with caring for our souls. The Church will nourish and guide us through the Fast to the Feast of the Nativity.

Let us be attentive to the teachings and practices of the Church. We can learn from the saints, martyrs and faithful through the centuries of the path to take for eternal life.

God is good and merciful. God's love is shown to us each day if we have eyes to see. Through the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos and all the saints, may our Lord have mercy on us and save us.

Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos. St. Amphilocius, Bishop of Iconium; St. Gregory; Blessed Alexander Nevsky. November 23/December 6, 2020. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic