

NT-LK25
09.15.19

A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by Peter Chrysologus ¹

Finding something we have lost gives us a fresh joy, and we are happier at having found the lost object that we should have been had we never lost it. This parable, however, is concerned more with divine tenderness and compassion than with human behavior, and it expresses a great truth. Humans are too greedy to forsake things of value for love of anything inferior. That is something only God can do. For God not only brought what was not into being, but he also went after what was lost while still protecting what he left behind, but he also went after what was lost while still protecting what he had left behind, and found what was lost without losing what he had in safe keeping.

This story, then, speaks of no earthly shepherd but of a heavenly one, and far from being a portrayal of human activity, this whole parable conceals divine mysteries, as becomes clear from the number mentioned when Christ says: *Which of you, if you had a hundred sheep and lost one of them...* You see how the loss of a single sheep made the shepherd grieve as though the whole flock were no longer in safe keeping but had gone astray, and how this made him leave the ninety-nine to go after the lost one and search for it, so that its recovery might make the flock complete again.

But let us now unfold the hidden meaning of this heavenly parable. The man who owns the hundred sheep is Christ. He is the good shepherd, the loving shepherd, who in a single sheep, that is in Adam, fashioned the whole flock of humankind. He set this sheep in a place of rich pasturage amidst the pleasures of paradise, but heedless of the shepherd's voice it trusted in the howling of wolves, lost the protection of the sheepfold, and was pierced through by deadly wounds.

Christ therefore came into the world to look for it, and he found it in the Virgin's womb. He came in the body assumed at his human birth, and raising that body on the cross, he placed the lost sheep on his own shoulders by his passion. Then in the intense joy of the resurrection he brought it to his heavenly home. *And he called his friends and neighbors*, that is the angels, and said to them: *Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep that was lost.*

The angels joined Christ in gladness and rejoicing at the return of the Lord's sheep. They did not take it amiss that he now reigned over them upon the throne of majesty, for the sin of envy had long since been banished from heaven together with the devil, and it could not gain entry there again through the Lamb who took away the sin of the world!

Brothers and sisters, Christ sought us on earth; let us seek him in heaven. He has borne us up to the glory of his divinity; let us bear him in our bodies by holiness. As the apostle says: *Glorify and bear God in your bodies.* That person bears God in his body whose bodily activities are free from sin.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – New York – 1971 – pg 116

09SN1602

09.16.19

From a letter by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr ²

Cyprian sends greetings to his brother Cornelius. My very dear brother, we have heard of the glorious witness given by your courageous faith. On learning of the honor you had won by your witness, we were filled with such joy that we felt ourselves sharers and companions in your praiseworthy achievements. After all, we have the same Church, the same mind. The same unbroken harmony. Why then should a priest not take pride in the praise given to a fellow priest as though it were given to him? What brotherhood fails to rejoice in the happiness of its brothers wherever they are?

Words cannot express how great was the exaltation and delight here when we heard of your good fortune and brave deeds: how you stood out as a leader of your brothers in their declaration of faith, while the leader's confession was enhanced as they declared their faith. You led the way to glory, but you gained many companions in that glory; being foremost in your readiness to bear witness on behalf of all, you prevailed on your people to become a single witness. We cannot decide which we ought to praise, your own ready and unshaken faith or the love of your brothers who would not leave you. While the courage of the bishop who thus led the way has been demonstrated, at the same time the unity of the brotherhood who followed has been manifested. Since you have one heart and one voice, it is the Roman Church as a whole that has thus borne witness.

Dearest brother, bright and shining is the faith which the blessed Apostle praised in your community. He foresaw in the spirit the praise your courage deserves and the strength that could not be broke,; he was heralding the future when he testified to your achievements; his praise of the fathers was a challenge to the sons. Your unity, your strength have become shining examples of these virtues to the rest of the brethren.

Divine providence has now prepared us. God's merciful design has warned us that the day of our own struggle, our own contest, is at hand. By that shared love which binds us closely together, we are doing all we can to exhort our congregation, to give ourselves unceasingly to fastings, vigils and prayers in common. These are the heavenly weapons which give us strength to stand firm and endure; they are the spiritual defenses, the God-given armaments that protect us.

Let us then remember one another, united in mind and heart. Let us pray without ceasing, you for us, we for you; by the love we share we shall thus relieve the strain of these great trials.

² The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1975 – p 1406

09SN1701

9.17.19

From a Treatise On The ascent of the Mind to God by St. Robert Bellarmine ³

Sweet Lord, you are meek and merciful. Who would not give himself wholeheartedly to your service, if he began to taste even a little of your fatherly rule? What command, Lord, do you give your servants? *Take my yoke upon you,* you say. And what is this yoke of yours like? *My yoke, you say, is easy and my burden light.* Who would not be glad to bear a yoke that does not press hard but caresses? Who would not be glad for a burden that does not weigh heavy but refreshes? And so you were right to add: *And you will find rest for your souls* . And what is this yoke of yours that does not weary, but gives rest? It is, of course, that first and greatest commandment: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.* What is easier, sweeter, more pleasant than to love goodness, beauty and love, the fullness of which you are, O Lord my God?

Is it not true that you promise those who keep your commandments a reward more desirable than great wealth and sweeter than honey? You promise a most abundant reward, for as your apostle James says: *The Lord has prepared a crown of life for those who love him.* What is this crown of life? It is surely a greater good than we can conceive of or desire, as Saint Paul says, quoting Isaiah: *Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him.*

Truly then the recompense is great for those who keep your commandments. The first and greatest commandment helps the one who obeys, not the God who commands. In addition, the other commandments of God perfect the one who obeys them. They provide one with what is needed. They instruct and enlighten him and make him good and blessed. If you are wise, then, know that you have been created for the glory of God and your own eternal salvation. This is your goal; this is the center of your life; this is the treasure of your heart. If you reach this goal, you will find happiness. If you fail to reach it, you will find misery.

May you consider truly good whatever leads to your goal and truly evil whatever makes you fall away from it. Prosperity and adversity, wealth and poverty, health and sickness, honors and humiliations, life and death, in the mind of the wise one, are not to be sought for their own sake, nor avoided for their own sake. But if they contribute to the glory of God and your eternal happiness, then they are good and should be sought. If they detract from this, they are evil and should be avoided.

³ The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1975 – pg 1411

WILLIAM 5A

09.18.19

On Contemplating God by William of St Thierry ¹

So, then, may all unrighteousness take its departure from my soul, that I may love the Lord my God with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my strength! Let all jealousy depart from me, lest I should love anything along with you that I do not love for your sake, true Lord and only Love! For when I love anything for your sake, I love not it, but you for whose sake I love that which I love. For you truly only are the Lord. To be ruled by you is for us salvation. For us to serve you is nothing else but to be saved by you!

Now how is it we are saved by you, O Lord. From whom salvation comes and whose blessing is upon your people, if it is not in receiving from you the gift of loving you and being loved by you? That, Lord, is why you willed that the Son of your right hand, the Man whom you made strong for your own self, should be called Jesus, that is to say, Savior, for he will save his people from their sins. There is no other in whom is salvation except him who taught us to love himself when he first loved us, even to death on the cross. By loving and holding us so dead he stirred us up to love himself, who first had loved us to the end. This is the righteousness of the sons of men: "Love me, for I love you." One seldom meets a person who can say: "I love you, *in order that* you may love me!" But, as the servant of your love proclaims and preaches, you who first loved us did this, precisely this. You first loved us so that we might love you. And that was not because you needed to be loved by us, but because we could not be what you created us to be, except by loving you. Having then in many ways and on various occasions spoken to the fathers by the prophets, now in these last days you have spoken to us in the Son, your Word, by whom the heavens were established, and all the power of them by the breath of his mouth. For you to speak thus in your Son was an open declaration, a "setting in the sun" as it were, of how much and in what sort of way you loved us, in that you spared not your own Son, but delivered him up for us all. Yes, and he himself loved us and gave himself for us.

This, Lord, is your word to us, this is your all-powerful message: he who, while all things kept silence (that is, were in the depths of error), came from the royal throne, the stern opponent of error and the gentle apostle of love. And everything he did and everything he said on earth, even the insults, the spitting, the buffeting, the cross and the grave, all that was nothing but yourself speaking in the Son, appealing to us by your love and stirring up our love for you.

For you, O God, our souls' Creator, knew this affection cannot be forced in the souls of the sons of men, but has to be evoked. And this is for the obvious reason that there is no freedom where there is compulsion, and, where freedom is lacking, so too is righteousness. But you, O righteous Lord, you who wish to save us, you never save or condemn anyone otherwise than justly. You are the author of both our judgment and our cause. Sitting upon your throne and judging righteous judgment, you judge the righteousness that you yourself have made. Thus will every mouth be shut, and the whole world be made subject to God, when you have pity on him on whom you will have pity, and extend mercy to him to whom you will be merciful. We could not with justice have been saved, had we not loved you, nor could we have loved you,

save by your gift. You willed, therefore, that we should love you. So, Lord, as the Apostle of your love tells us, and as we ourselves have said before, you “first loved us”; and you love all your lovers first.

[1](#)On Contemplating God – William of st Thierry – Cistercian Fathers series #3 – Cistercian Publications – Spencer, MA – 1971 – pg 50

We find in scripture a remarkable instance of a Divine Call, and the manner in which it is our duty to meet it. Samuel was a mere child when he was brought to the house of the Lord; and in due time he was called to a sacred office, and made a prophet. He was called, and he forthwith answered the call. He did not understand at first who called, and what was meant; but on going to Eli he learned who spoke, and what his answer should be. So when God called again, he said: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." Here is prompt obedience.

Very different in its circumstances was St. Paul's call, but resembling Samuel's in this respect, that, when God called, he also promptly obeyed. When St. Paul heard the voice from heaven, he said at once, trembling and astonished, "Lord, what will you have me do?" This same obedience is stated or implied in two accounts which he himself gives of his miraculous conversion. In chapter 22 he says, "And I said, What shall I do, Lord?" and in ch. 26 he tells King Agrippa: "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision". Such is the account given us in St. Paul's case of that first step in God's gracious dealings with him, which ended in his eternal salvation. "Whom He foreknew, He also predestined – and whom He predestined, He also called" – here was the first act which took place in time – "and whom He called He also justified, and whom He justified, He also glorified". Such is the Divine series of mercies; and you see that it was prompt obedience on St. Paul's part which moved Divine grace forward.

This, then, is the first lesson taught us by St. Paul's conversion, promptly to obey the call. If we do obey it, to God be the glory, for He it is Who works in us. If we do not obey, to ourselves be all the shame, for sin and unbelief work in us.

Such is the state of mind expressed by holy David in Psalm 27: "When you said, Seek My face, my heart said to you: Your face, O Lord, will I seek". And this also is illustrated in the case of many other saints in scripture shown in word and deed. For instance, we read of the apostles that "Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And He said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him". Again, when He saw James and John with their father Zebedee, "He called them; and they immediately left the ship, and their father and followed Him." And so also with St. Matthew at the custom house, "He said to him, Follow Me; and he left all, rose up and followed Him."

⁴ Parochial and Plain sermons – vol. VIII – John Henry Newman – Longmans, Green & Co – London – 1891 – pg 17f

Love and perseverance are the crown of faith: a reading from the final exhortation of Andrew Kim Taegon, priest and martyr. ⁵

My brothers and sisters, my dearest friends, think again and again on this: God has ruled over all things in heaven and on earth from the beginning of time; then reflect on why and for what purpose he chose each one of us to be created in his own image and likeness.

In this world of perils and hardship if we did not recognize the Lord as our Creator, there would be no benefit either in being born or in our continued existence. We have come into this world by God's grace; by that same grace we have received baptism, entrance into the Church, and the honor of being called Christians. Yet what good will this do us if we are Christians in name alone and not in fact? We would have come into the world for nothing, we would have entered the Church for nothing, and we would have betrayed even God and his grace. It would be better never to have been born than to receive the grace of God and then to sin against him.

Look at the farmer who cultivates his rice fields. In season he plows, then fertilizes the earth; never counting the cost, he labors under the sun to nurture the seed he has planted. When harvest time comes and the rice crop is abundant, forgetting his labor and sweat, he rejoices with an exultant heart. But if the crop is sparse and there is nothing but straw and husks, the farmer broods over his toil and sweat and turns his back on that field with a disgust that is all the greater the harder he has toiled.

The Lord is like a farmer and we are the field of rice that he fertilizes with his grace and by the mystery of the incarnation and the redemption irrigates with his blood, in order that we will grow and reach maturity. When harvest time comes, the day of judgment, those who have grown to maturity in the grace of God will find the joy of adopted children in the kingdom of heaven; those who have not grown to maturity will become God's enemies and, even though they were once his children, they will be punished according to their deeds for all eternity.

Dearest brothers and sisters: when he was in the world, the Lord Jesus bore countless sorrows and by his own passion and death founded his Church; now he gives it increase through the sufferings of his faithful. No matter how fiercely the powers of this world oppress and oppose the Church, they will never bring it down. Even since his ascension and from the time of the apostles to the present, the Lord Jesus has made his Church grow even in the midst of tribulation.

For the last fifty or sixty years, ever since the coming of the Church to our own land of Korea, the Faithful have suffered persecution over and over again. Persecution still rages and as a result many who are friends in the household of the faith, myself among them, have been thrown into prison and like you are experiencing severe distress. Because we have become

⁵ *Pro Corea Documenta*, ed. Mission Catholique Seoul (Seoul-Paris, 1938) v. 1, pp. 74-75; trans. in *NCCB Newsletter*, v. 21, August/September 1985.

the one Body, should not our hearts be grieved for the members who are suffering? Because of the human ties that bind us, should we not feel deeply the pain of our separation? But, as the Scriptures say, God numbers the very hairs of our head and in his all-embracing providence he has care over us all. Persecution, therefore, can only be regarded as the command of the Lord or as a prize he gives or as a punishment he permits.

Hold fast, then, to the will of God and with all your heart fight the good fight under the leadership of Jesus; conquer again the diabolical power of this world that Christ has already vanquished. I beg you not to fail in your love for one another, but to support one another and to stand fast until the Lord mercifully delivers us from our trials. There are twenty of us in this place and by God's grace we are so far all well. If any of us is executed, I ask you not to forget our families. I have many things to say, yet how can pen and paper capture what I feel? I end this letter. As we are all near the final ordeal, I urge you to remain steadfast in faith, so that at last we will reach heaven and there rejoice together. I embrace you all in love.

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Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, from The Saints, ed. John Coulson⁶

Few people love the tax collector. Even in these days when the relation between taxpayer and taxed is, no doubt, scrupulously correct, his name strikes cold. Much more was this so in the Palestine of the first century, when it was in his interests to bully and harrify and falsify. But even the mild and honest tax collector was not acceptable to official Judaism: he did business with the gentile and handled his money; he was legally impure, socially outcast. A Jewish Rabbi would be bold indeed to invite him to join his inner circle of disciples: it would be a gesture of defiance to the established prejudice. And so the formula 'publicans and sinners' slipped even into the phrase book of the evangelist and, quaintly enough, into the Gospel of Matthew the publican. This term 'publican' by the way does not accurately describe Matthew's profession but flatters it. The Pharisees might despise it, but the trade was a profitable one and much sought after: whether it be pursued honestly or dishonestly would depend on the character of the officer.

"And Jesus passed further on, he saw Levi, the son of Alpheus, sitting at work in the customs-house and said to him, "Follow me"; and he rose and followed him. That this was a call to the apostolate there is no doubt - its terms too closely match those of the call of Simon and Andrew to be otherwise. Yet 'Levi' does not appear in any list of the Twelve. Now the vocation of the tax collector is reported in the first Gospel too, but there he is called 'Matthew', thus identifying him with the Matthew who appears in all the apostolic lists. The widely accepted and most natural explanation is that Matthew and Levi are one person with two Semitic names. It may be that our Lord himself gave him the name Matthew (Mattai, 'gift of God', in Aramaic) as he gave Kepha to Simon.

This Matthew then got up from his registers and henceforth - at our Lord's suggestion - took a lesson from the lilies and birds that never did a day's calculation in their lives. His master was no longer Antipas, the shrewd 'fox' but one who, unlike the foxes, had not even a home. The change destroyed all Matthew's worldly prospects: Simon and Andrew might return to their fish, but Matthew had thrown over a coveted business and could never recover it. He left it gladly, it seems and completely - at least it was not he but Judas who kept the accounts for the apostolic group.

After the incident of his call Matthew disappears from the New Testament except as a name in the apostolic lists. What became of him? We have a sentence from a book by Bishop Papias of Hieropolis. "Matthew wrote an ordered account of the oracles (of our Lord) and each interpreted these oracles according to his ability." Time had had its revenge. When the need for a written gospel record began to be felt, upon which of the Apostles would the choice fall? Upon one who used the pen, no doubt. Poor Matthew was back where he started, but this time with an eager will and high purpose. In Palestine, some time between the years 40 and 50, this ex-civil servant produced not the lively and artless Gospel of St. Mark but the orderly, almost ledger like, treatise, which we know as 'The Gospel according to St. Matthew.'

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⁶The Saints, ed. John Coulson, Guild Press-NY, 1957, p.538-541.

And so Matthew's old trade entered a new service; the accountant became an evangelist. It is not surprising that he alone records his Master's words; "Every scholar whose learning is of the kingdom of heaven...knows how to bring both new and old things out of his treasure house. For there is no poor tool of ours that God's service will not perfect and dignify.

It is commonly but not unanimously affirmed he died a martyr's death; but we know for certain that he lived a martyr's life - and that is enough. And for us he will always be the man who knew what money was and what it was not.