

Third Sunday after Pentecost - June 28/15, 2009 Matthew 6:22-33

In the gospel today, our Lord Jesus Christ brings to us some very clear and simple truths, which we usually forget being immersed in the worldly mind. The Lord tells us *“The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.”*

The mind is the eye of the entire soul. It was made by God to be the soul’s window to the kingdom of heaven. We know from experience that when the heavenly light is poured into our soul, in baptism, confession, Divine Liturgy, the chains of bondage fall away from us, as Peter’s chains did in prison. Then we see our intentions, our desires and all of our life becoming filled with light. When our souls are illumined by a pure and healthy mind, the passions don’t stick to us very easily. As we hear in Titus, ch. 1, “Unto the pure, all things are pure.”

We, each one of us, parents, teachers, clergy, or leaders, help clear the pathways of life of the brambles and dangerous places for those whose eyes are not yet developed, who cannot see on their own. This means that we must learn to rely, not so much on our bodily sight, but upon a pure mind, which is most precious gift of God to those who can receive it. St. Paul wrote in First Corinthians, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

There is nothing in the world of more value than a pure heart. Certainly, we must be watchful in defending this most precious gift. If we neglect to defend, with vigilance, there is no end to the trouble that we can invite. Evil doesn’t happen overnight; it progresses in small steps. The devil can worm himself into our hearts with small movements.

Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain has written, “When Christ said that the devil is the ruler of this world, He did not mean that he has power over the world, but that he has dominion over vanity and lies. And those who have given their heart to vanity and profane things live under the rulership of the darkness of this world.”

When our hearts are captured by the vainness and baseness of this world our minds become muddled and we can easily succumb to the secular spirit of our age, which lures us to our own destruction. This secular spirit enters into our heart with soft promises, but deadly intent, just like a porcupine seeking to enter a hare’s nest. In the beginning, porcupine pleads with the hare to allow it just to place its head in the nest for a short time to keep out of the weather. Then it convinces to let just one foot come in; then the other. Eventually, the porcupine takes the entire space and the hare is evicted from his own home.

This is how it works when we are not careful. Our spiritual eyes become muddled, and being muddled, we allow confusion. With confusion comes the shadow of darkness. With the shadow of darkness, comes the occupation of evil. If we are not careful, watchful and treasuring the light of Christ, we too can make these small concessions and let this secular spirit overcome us.

This is our clear and present danger. It needs to be our endeavor to foster in our children and each other, as brothers and sisters in Christ, love of the kingdom of heaven and a heavy scrutiny of the secular age we live in.

The Lord speaks to us in St. Matthew, ch. 16, that the soul is worth more than the entire world. Therefore, we need to restrain ourselves and not let the secular spirit, with all of its beguilements, occupy our hearts. We need to clear our eyes, that we might again gaze upon the future life of man in the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom is not the backdrop of our lives; it is the spiritual ground we walk upon. We need to be oriented and determined to live in a state of obedience and not in a state of confusion.

One of the great joys we share in seeing a newly baptized and illumined soul is that there is one more brother in Christ, one more sister in Christ, who desires a clean heart and wants to be a citizen of heaven. Likewise, there is great joy in heaven when one sinner repents and one soul again is claimed by Christ for His kingdom. The soul, the true human being, who repents and belongs to Christ is beautiful and reveals the presence of God's Grace.