

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)

St. Nicholas

Luke 6:17-23

And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. (KJV)

God is good and merciful, kind and loving. As we prepare for the Feast of the Nativity, it is necessary to be mindful of the fragility of life and the importance of laying up treasures in heaven.

The rich man in today's Gospel was concerned about his material wealth and not his soul. He wanted to continue to accumulate material goods. Sharing his wealth with the needy was not a consideration.

Suddenly, the rich man's soul was to be required of him. His material goods would do him no good. The material goods would go to others and his selfishness and greed would be to his detriment.

St. Nicholas, whose feast is being celebrated today, is known for his goodness and kindness. The Lord speaks to the hearts and minds of the attentive on this day. Being kind and loving as the Lord is the constant challenge of believers.

The Nativity Fast is a time of preparation and transformation. Believers are to ready the self to welcome the New Born Christ Child. All that is not of Christ is to be removed from the self during this fast period.

The Lord Jesus Christ aids believers through prayer and fasting to become transformed. Charitable giving from the heart facilitates the process of transformation.

Purity of heart, mind and soul is a primary goal of the Nativity Fast. Christ feels welcome in the believer's life when Christ is the primary interest. When the believer's life is cluttered with the world, Christ is clearly not welcome.

The commercialism in today's world draws the attention of the less than vigilant and focused-believer. Greed and excess material accumulation is evident in today's world.

While hunger seems to have increased in recent years, larger homes and estates as well as storage units seem to be on the increase among the wealthy and well-to-do.

Now is the time to examine the heart, mind and soul and determine the primary interest or interests in life. The heart-felt question to ask is whether we identify with the rich man in the current Gospel or charitable St. Nicholas?

Do we identify with the rich man seeking to have greater storage space for our goods? Do we lay up treasures in heaven with the current goods, possessions and talents we have?

Is our home modest in size? Is our car modest in size? Do we have an over abundance of clothing while others go wanting? What percentage of our income goes to charity?

Today is the day to focus on the state of the soul. Focusing on the soul has a place everyday of life. We never know the last moment of life. The end may come suddenly and unexpectedly.

While most people live decades of life, the exact length of each life is not known. Each person must care for the soul at all times and in all places. Only when Christ is first and foremost in life are we ready and prepared for the unexpected.

The Nativity Fast is proceeding with certainty to conclusion. The time remaining is an opportunity to invest in the Kingdom of God. Serious believers welcome the days of the Nativity Fast.

Thank God for the Gospel lessons at each Divine Liturgy to speak to the heart, mind and soul. Thank God for the constant love, goodness and mercy spurring change within each believer.

God does not seek persons to perish in sin. God wants each person to repent and love the Lord with all the heart, mind and soul. Love of God includes love of neighbor when it is sincere and real love.

Use the remaining time of the Nativity Fast to love the Lord God. Use the time to repent and reject from life all that is not of Christ. Keep each neighbor and Christ in mind during the remaining days of life.

The Twenty Sixth Sunday after Pentecost. St. Nicholas the Wonderworker.
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