



The Mystery of God's Judgements

Father Paisios (*St. Paisios of Mount Athos*) told us the following story, wishing to give us an example of the way God looks after His children, while many times we get angry at Him and do not understand His actions:

An ascetic was praying to God asking Him to reveal why the righteous and pious people are miserable and suffer unjustly, whereas the unrighteous and sinful ones are rich and contented. While he was asking God to reveal to him this mystery, he heard a voice saying to him: "Do not ask to comprehend what your mind and power of knowledge cannot grasp and do not examine the mysteries of God, as His judgments are like an endless ocean. However, since you wish to know, go out there in the world and watch carefully the people, and you will be able to understand a small part of God's judgment. Then, you will know that God's prudent governing is unexplored and inscrutable."

When the ascetic heard all this, he left for the world. After walking for a while, he reached a meadow. There was a fountain nearby and an old tree with a large hollow. He hid inside the hollow, in order to watch the busy street passing by the meadow. After a while, a rich man passed by riding his horse. He stopped by the fountain to drink some water and rest. While he was sitting there, he took a purse out of his pocket containing one hundred golden coins, and started counting them. When he finished counting, he mistakenly left the purse on the grass instead of putting it in his pocket. After he ate, he rested and slept for awhile, and then he took off without realizing that he had left his purse on the grass.

After some time, another passer-by appeared. He stopped by the fountain, and when he saw the purse with the golden coins, he took it and left running in the fields. A few minutes later, a third man came along. As he was tired, he too went by the fountain to drink some water and sat to eat a piece of bread. As this poor man was eating, the rich man came back to look for his purse. He had an extremely angry look on his face and went straight to him, shouting in a rage and demanding his purse. The poor man, though, who had no idea about the purse and the golden coins, assured him that he had not seen it. Then, the rich man began beating him up so badly that he finally killed him. He searched through his clothes and found nothing. He left feeling very sad.

The ascetic was watching the incident sitting inside the hollow and was astounded. He felt very sad and began to cry, feeling sorry for the unjust death of the poor man and prayed to God: "Lord, what is the meaning of this will of Yours? Let me know how Your kindness can tolerate such an injustice. Someone lost the coins, another man found them, and a third man was unjustly murdered!"

As he was praying and crying, an angel of the Lord appeared and told him: "Do not feel sorry for the poor man, nor think that this incident is not the will of God. Bear in mind that some things occur, either because God permits them to, or in order to instruct people or because He causes them to happen for our benefit.

"Now, listen: The man who lost the golden coins is the next door neighbor of the one who found



them. He owned a farm worth one hundred golden coins. The rich man, who was an avaricious person, forced him to sell his farm to him for only fifty golden coins. The poor man, feeling helpless, prayed to God to punish his unjust neighbor on his behalf. And God rewarded him in double. The second man, the tired and poor one, who was unjustly killed, had once committed a murder. He had honestly repented and lived the rest of his life according to God's will. He constantly prayed to God to forgive him and said to Him: 'God, let me have the same kind of death as the one I gave.' Of course, our Lord had forgiven him since the first time he expressed his repentance for his sinful act. However, He was moved by the sensitivity and righteousness of this man, who not only tried to live according to His will, but also wished to pay back for his sinful act. So, God fulfilled his wish and gave him the chance to experience a violent death, as he himself had asked for, and took him to heaven by His side, granting him a glorious laurel for his deep and responsive repentance!

"The third man, the avaricious one, who lost the golden coins and committed the murder, had fallen in two sins, avarice and stinginess. God permitted a violent murder to be committed, so that he may experience pain, which in turn, would lead him to repentance. The sin of murder turned out to be the cause for his decision to leave the world and become a monk.

"So, where and under what circumstances do you see that God was unjust, merciless and cruel? You should not examine God's judgments, as He always makes them correctly and according to the way He knows, whereas you misjudge them and find them unjust. You should also know that many things happen with God's will for reasons we do not know. Therefore, the right thing for us to say is: 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments' (Psalm 118:137)."