



During the last forty days of this Holy Great Fast, it is particularly important to focus on the positive meaning of the Lord's life on earth. The Lord Jesus Christ personified goodness. He was what good is: (Grace and Truth), was the deliverer of what good delivers: (Peace) and became what goodness ultimately leads to: (Salvation). The Lord Jesus Christ's main purpose on earth was to be goodness to all, and to show all how goodness: (the Kingdom of Heaven) is to be attained. No one could fathom how great **His Goodness** was to become.

*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through the Lord Jesus Christ" (John 1:14-17).*

The ultimate display of God's grace, His loving kindness and redeeming love, was in the Incarnation

of His Son for the redemption of mankind. The Word Became flesh was a dispensation quite different in quality and essence from the dispensation unfolded by the prophets of the Old. It was a free gift whose grace excelled the offense of Adam, overthrew the ominous bondage of death and cancelled the debt humanity had to pay. "*But the free gift is not like the offense*" (Romans 5:15). St. Augustine writes, "The creation of the world did not cost God anything; He said to this object, 'Let it be' and it was certainly done. But the salvation of the world did cost Him to come down from Heaven and suffer cruelty, mockery and shame, and finally to die on the Cross for our behalf." It is an absolute truth that the Incarnation and Redemption are the epitome of God's grace and love to mankind.

It is without question that He who renewed creation is greater than all creation. Among many brothers, He has been granted the greatest blessings and has been given the authority to grant unto us the Truth and the gift of the Holy Spirit, "Whom the Lord Jesus promised the believers that He will abide with them forever, (John 14:16 and John 16:13) and will teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all things that Jesus said; His teachings and guide them to the Truth (John 14:26).

More specifically, the Church has been given the promise of guidance into all Truth and the assurance of the work of the Holy Spirit, that same Holy Spirit who was abiding in those who have gone before her. This is the origin of our tradition which is holy and scripture- based. "However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. This is our truth today brought about through the grace of God, in the work of the Holy Spirit, the Helper of mankind.

The Lord Jesus Christ was full of Grace and Truth. His Grace was given to us through His love, and His abiding Truth is still with us today. It is through His irrefutable goodness of Grace and Truth, brought and given unto us by the Lord Jesus Christ, that we, today, partake of a life in communion with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Athanasius confirms the absoluteness of the Truth in his writings,

"Now this is a proof that Christ is God the Word, and the Power of God. For whereas human beings cease, and the Word of Christ abides, it is clear to all eyes what ceases is temporary, but that He who abides is God, and the true Son of God, His only Begotten

Word" (St. Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation*, p.109).

*"Do you now believe? Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet, I am not alone because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"*(John 16:31-33). Perfect peace was brought by the Lord Jesus Christ. He carried the message of peace, of salvation and reconciliation of humanity with God.

Together with grace, peace became a part of the traditional Christians greetings to each other in the early church, *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 1:3). From St. Paul, we understand that peace is our reconciliation with God and with each other. "Peace be to you" is stated in the Divine Liturgy in association with the reading of the Holy Gospel, the kiss of Peace, and the Lord's Prayer. The Lord Jesus Christ's peace was such that it helped Him bear all things (I Corinthians 13:7), it was not a mere statement or phrase. His love bore all things to the extent of giving up His Holy life. His peace assisted Him to bear mockery, insults, and tribulation

obediently and submissively. Our Lord Jesus Christ had inner peace that surpassed understanding. It was that inner peace, while on the cross going through all the agony and pain of crucifixion, that attracted the thief on the right side and made him ask for it Remember me.

The stories on the transformational effect and influence of inner peace on people are many. Among them is the episode of St. Glasius and the thief.

St. Glasius, the father to a certain group of monks, had an extremely valuable Holy Bible. St. Glasius placed his valuable Holy Bible in the church of the monastery for the benefit of all the monks. The devil moved one of the visitors to the monastery to steal it. He then quickly went to sell the valuable Holy Bible in the market. Someone who collected valuable books offered to willingly purchase it for 18 denarii, after taking it for appraisal to someone who knew how to appraise valuable books.

Upon agreement, the enthusiastic purchaser went and showed the Holy Bible to Father Glasius, who immediately recognized it as his precious Holy Bible, stolen from the church. In spite of the fact, Father Glasius encouraged this man to buy the Holy Bible for the price agreed upon. The man went to the thief and told him what had happened. The thief was so

shocked to hear the name of Father Glasius and asked if Father Glasius had said anything else. After the thief had known that St. Glasius had not uttered a word concerning the theft he went right away to Father Glasius and took the Holy Bible with him after refusing to sell it. He confessed his sin to Father Glasius, returned the Holy Bible and asked for forgiveness. Not only that, but he stayed with Father Glasius and consecrated himself for a monastic life. This is yet another story about how the transformational power that belongs to peace has transformed the life of two thieves, one on the right and one seeking the right.

Further, St. John Chrysostom writes this homily on keeping peace and not letting the world take it from us, with the exploration of the meaning of 'I Have Overcome the World.'

"There will be a time when you will know all things clearly. He speaks of the time of the Resurrection (For He was with them and talked with them forty days, being assembled with them and speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God) because now being in fear, you give no heed to My Words; but then when you see Me risen again, and converse with Me, you will be able to learn all things plainly Do you see that He made answer to what was secretly harboring in their minds?...The champion truly will

then be glorious, not when He has not closed with His opponent, but when having closed He is not held by him. We therefore are not mortal, because of our struggle with death, but we are not mortal, because of our victory. So you would not call him mortal, who has been for only a short time in the hands of death. We may speak of those who sleep in this way, for they are dead, so to say, and without action. Does death corrupt our bodies? What of that? This is not so that they may remain in corruption, but in immortality; let us follow our King; let us also set up a trophy; let us despise the world's pleasures. We need no toil to do so. Let us transfer our souls to Heaven, and all the world is conquered. Consider this also now: that you are a stranger and a sojourner, and let nothing disturb you in this foreign land. For you have a City whose Artificer and Creator is God, and the sojourning itself is but for a short time" (St. John Chrysostom, Homily LXXIX on John XVI, 2, 3. pp. 292-293).

"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.' The Jews then murmured against Him because He said, ' I am the Bread which came down from Heaven.' And they said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?



How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from Heaven?' Jesus therefore answered and said to them, 'Do not murmur among you. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.'

Many people ask about the great significance of the last 40 days prior to the Glorious Resurrection of the Lord. These last 40 days symbolize our toil against the snares of this world. At the end of these forty days, when we celebrate the feast of Resurrection, we celebrate both Our Lord Jesus Christ rising from the dead and also our victory over sin and our human weaknesses. During the forty days of fast, we look forward to the 50 days following the glorious Resurrection as symbolic of life with our Lord of Salvation in His Kingdom.. What is salvation then? We are often instructed about how to obtain salvation, but what is the Lords saying He will raise him up at the last day for? What are the joys to anticipate? "In eternal life, will we know God and live with Jesus? The Lord Jesus Himself said, "*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the true and only God, and Jesus Christ whom You sent*" (John 17:3).

We frequently hear of the evils that we must overcome, the trials we must face, and the sufferings we must endure. People find it hard to live in peace



and harmony with each other. Even when we find peace, it is peace of an earthly nature, always short lived, often falls short of our expectations and is overshadowed by the toils and demands of this life. The truth of the matter is that the Grace and Peace of the Lord is the ultimate goal. That is the ultimate goal and not overcoming hardships. In the Kingdom we shall behold God. This is the greatest merit of Salvation Eternal happiness will be found in Heaven, with joy in the Home of God and feasts with the hosts of angels. Feasts will have no beginning and no end. There will be no need for endurance, justice or moderation, for in Heaven there is no evil. Mercy is not needed because there is no misery. There will be no need to feed, drink or clothe because everyone will be clothed in salvation. Every one will be in peace with everyone. Contentment will abound, you will be more than satisfied with salvation, with your God. As His Holiness Pope Shenouda often says, "You will find all that you desire."

St. John Chrysostom wrote much on salvation and the Glorious Resurrection, including:

"I will raise him up at the last day signifies to us all, 'There is a Resurrection, and a Judgment, and a scrutiny of our actions. And let as many as deem that there is such a thing as fate repeat this, and let them all at once be delivered from the rottenness of their

malady; for if there is a Resurrection and a Judgment, there is no fate, though they bring ten thousand arguments, and choke themselves to prove it. But I am ashamed to be teaching Christians concerning the Resurrection: for he who needs to learn that there is Resurrection, and who has not firmly persuaded himself that the affairs of this world go on not by fate, and without design, and as chance will have them, can be no Christian. If there were no Resurrection, how would the justice of God be preserved, when so many evil men prosper, and so many good men are afflicted and die in their affliction? Where shall each of these obtain his deserts, if so be that there is no Resurrection? No one of those who have lived aright disbelieves the Resurrection, but every day they pray and repeat that holy sentence, Thy Kingdom come.'" (St. John Chrysostom, Homily XLV on John VI, 3. p.163).

In these forty days of fasting, seek the Goodness of He Who, in grace and truth came, and left His peace and promise of salvation with us. Make this fasting one of joyful anticipation of the Eternal Life to come.

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