



Introduction

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Your glory." These words prayed in the Divine Liturgy and Agpeya are Isaiah's exact words describing what he had seen in a vision. *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord*

sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!' And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:1-4). The prophet was taken so much by the grandeur of the scene; and feeling so small having nothing in his hand to offer he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

That is Who God is: Holy, His glory fills heaven and earth and His greatness is revealed in His creation. Did God have any specific intention behind all that is

created in heaven and on earth? Did He have a mission and a commission for everything and everyone?

What is that in heaven's hand?

Heaven is full of wondrous things that make us ponder the awesomely great power behind its creation. God has created everything out of, in and for His own glory. As is said in the Holy Book of Proverbs "*The Lord has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom*" (Proverbs 16:4). Everything created calls for the praise and glorification of God's mighty name. The midnight praises in the Orthodox Church are sheer praises (called canticles) taken from the omitted chapters of the Holy Book of Daniel. They show how the three young men even while in the furnace bound to be burnt down to ashes felt they still have at hand a commission "*Now we are following You with all our heart, and we fear You, and seek Your face*" (Daniel 3:41, OSB). As out of one mouth, called upon all the un rational creation to bless, glorify and praise God with them saying, "*Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord, and sing a hymn to the Lord, and exalt Him beyond measure unto the ages. Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord,...Bless the Lord, you heavens,...Bless the Lord, all you waters above heaven,...Bless the Lord, all you powers of the*

Lord,...Bless the Lord, you sun and moon,...Bless the Lord, you stars of heaven,...Bless the Lord, every shower and dew,...Bless the Lord, all you winds,...Bless the Lord, you fire and heat,...Bless the Lord, you winter cold and summer heat,...Bless the Lord, you dews and snows,...Bless the Lord, you frost and cold,...Bless the Lord, you hoarfrosts and snows,...Bless the Lord, you night and day,...Bless the Lord, you light and darkness,...Bless the Lord, you lightning and clouds,...Let the earth bless the Lord,...Bless the Lord, you mountains and hills,...Bless the Lord, all you things growing on the earth,...Bless the Lord, you springs,...Bless the Lord, you seas and rivers,...Bless the Lord, you sea-monsters and everything that moves in the waters,...Bless the Lord, all you birds of heaven,...Bless the Lord, all you wild animals and cattle,...Bless the Lord, O children of men,...Bless the Lord, O Israel,...Bless the Lord, O priests of the Lord,...Bless the Lord, O servants of the Lord,...Bless the Lord, O spirits and souls of the righteous,...Bless the Lord, O holy ones and humble in heart,...Bless the Lord, O Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, and sing a hymn to Him, and exalt Him beyond measure unto the age; for He delivered us from Hades and saved us from the hand of death. He rescued us from the midst of the burning fiery furnace and saved us from the midst of the fire. Give

thanks to the Lord, for He is good, because His mercy endures forever. Bless the Lord, the God of gods, all you who worship Him, and sing a hymn and give thanks to Him; For His mercy endures forever" (Daniel 3:57-90, OSB).

King David in Psalm 148 (which is also used in the midnight praises) calls upon the heavens to praise the Lord saying, "*Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you stars of light! Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away. Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all the depths; fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. And He has exalted the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints— Of the*

children of Israel, a people near to Him. Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 148:1-14).

What is that in the earth's hand?

As King David said in Psalm 24, *"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters"* (Psalm 24:1-2).

The earth offered God both animate and inanimate creatures to serve His purpose and be at His service. A crow provided both Elijah and St. Paul the hermit with food, a whale swallowed Jonah, a tree and a worm to eat the tree, a cock reminded St. Peter and a donkey rebuked a prophet. Many more are the examples of God's use of His created creatures to deliver His messages and accomplish His missions. St. Paul asserted how much we can learn from nature *"Does not even nature itself teach you..."* (1 Corinthians 11:14).

What is that in Moses' hand?

When Moses was reluctant to accept God's commission to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, God, wanting to show His power to Moses, asked him, *"What is that in your hand?"* (Exodus 4:2). That small rod Moses had cut down from a tree with which to shepherd his flock was used to bring about tremendous things that revealed God's power and brought glory to his name. That small rod in Moses

hand which he duly called "God's rod" and God, in humility and appreciation, called it "Moses' rod" was used to split the red sea and draw water from the rock.

What is that in the man's hand?

Upon desiring to enter Jerusalem, the Lord saw in a simple man's hand a colt that He needed to ride on. So He sent His disciples to fetch it, *"And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, 'Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?' thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it.' So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, 'Why are you loosing the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of him.' Then they brought him to Jesus" (Luke 19:29-34).* We do not read that the disciples were met with any resistance or unwillingness from the owner. On that simple colt the Lord entered Jerusalem as King of kings and Lord of lords.

What is that in our hand?

God asks the same question He addressed Moses

with "What is that in your hand?" and the same request addressed to the owner of the colt. "The Lord has need of him". Putting them together, they usher in what God wants us to hear and perform. Just as everything in heaven and on earth are under God's disposal, commissioned to praising and glorifying Him, so everything in our hands should be utilized to glorify the name of its creator. King David expressed this true fact saying, *"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. For, we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope"* (1 Chronicles 29:14-15).

All the modern inventions ranging from cars, mobiles, all kinds and brands of electronics that we feel proud owning after having labored to possess them can become two edged swords. They can become a source of pride, arrogance and selfishness or a source of gratitude to the One Who is behind the brain that have designed them and who assisted us to own them. In this respect, the least sign of gratitude to God is to serve Him by serving others through them. For example, the first use Gutenberg had made of his new invention of the print press was printing the Holy Bible. Another example, a car can

be used for transporting brethrens to church; a call on the cell phone to inquire about a lonely friend or one who has not been attending church is much more beneficial than wasting it in gossip and idle talk. Even the watch on your wrist can be a reminder not only of your scheduled responsibilities but a cause for raising your heart in prayers and thanksgiving. A good spiritual practice that some spiritual fathers teach is to offer a short prayer of thanksgiving every time we look at our watch and perhaps at the onset of every hour. Even our homes can be utilized to accommodate prayer meetings instead of futile social gatherings. In the past early Christians were so sensitive to this truth and so ready that they gave all they had to the apostles for the general use. In places where there were no church buildings some offered their homes to become meeting places. St. Paul testifies in his greeting, "*The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house*" (1 Corinthians 16:19).

Conclusion

The lesson at hand to be learned is that all talents, gifts, and possessions we have are from God and should be utilized for the glory of His name. If not so, they are bound to become sources and causes of our falling in greed, selfishness, pride, and

arrogance. Gifts of painting, drawing, composing, and many others can either be utilized to bring glory to God or vice versa. A delayed response is like no response at all. Thus the things we supposedly own are not for us to just hoard but they are for us to enjoy stewardship over them but at the same time use them to serve others and in the end to bring glory to God's name. The list of what is in our hands is long and broad. May the Lord quicken our hearts to respond and offer Him what we have in our hands to make use of for the glory of His name.

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