

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Monday, 21 October 2019

Saint Hilarion the Great

Readings: Romans 4:20-25; Luke 12:13-21

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In response to a man's demand that Jesus settle an inheritance dispute, Jesus declines with a question that hints at his identity: who appointed me as your arbitrator? This question echoes the one put to Moses: "Who has appointed you ruler and judge over us?" (Exodus 2:14). Luke includes this question twice in Stephen's speech (Acts 7:27, 35) showing that although some Israelites rejected Moses, God appointed him as their redeemer. Likewise, Jesus will be rejected but will bring about God's redemption.

Rather than resolve the dispute, Jesus uses the occasion to instruct the crowd to be on guard against all kinds of greed. Greed will lead people to obsession with material goods which in turn will lead to self-absorption. Jesus makes this point with the parable of the rich fool. The rich man in the parable is only concerned about "me": my harvest, my barn, my grain. Jesus calls him a fool because he puts his trust in his possessions rather than in God. His plans would be utterly futile because that very night his life will be demanded of him. In the blink of an eye, he will have to leave behind everything he is planning to store up in big barns. The lesson of this parable is: keep God in the picture; look at earthly things from the perspective of eternity and store up treasure in heaven.

St. Hilarion the Great, whose feast we are celebrating today, recognized the seriousness of this teaching of Jesus. He was born in Thabatha, a town near Gaza in Palestine. He was educated in Alexandria, Egypt. After his conversion to Christianity, he spent some time with St. Anthony of Egypt, a holy man drawn to prayer and solitude. He performed so many miracles that he became very famous. To escape from his reputation as miracle-worker he used to roam the world anonymously. He finally settled in Cyprus where he died when he was at about age 80.

Reflection

Material possessions can only lead us into self-deception and emptiness. On the other hand, solitude-the positive condition of being alone with God-is the true source of happiness in this world. When we spend time in solitude and prayer, we store up treasures in heaven.

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