



THE VOICE OF SAINT MARK

Podcast of the Coptic Orthodox Tradition

Parish of Saint John the Theologian – Dijon

Episode:

The Treasures

Gospel of Matthew 6:19–34 | 1st Sunday of Great Lent

Coptic Orthodox Tradition

Episode Presentation

Dear listeners,

Welcome to The Voice of Saint Mark, the podcast of the Coptic Orthodox parish of Saint John the Theologian in Dijon.

We have now reached the first Sunday of Great Lent — that blessed and demanding season in the life of the Coptic Church: a time of withdrawal, of inner recentring, of spiritual struggle and return to what is essential.

The Gospel proposed to us today is from Saint Matthew, chapter 6, verses 19 to 34.

Let us now listen to the Word of the Lord.

Gospel of Matthew 6:19–34

At that time, the Lord said:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal;

but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?”

Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Let us now listen to the homily of Father Roland.

Homily

✠ *In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God,
Amen. ✠*

We have entered the desert.

Lent is not just another season, it is not a tradition, nor merely a habit — it is a combat. It is a purification, a return to God. Today Christ does not console us; he confronts us, he places us before a decisive question: Where is your treasure? For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

And the heart, in the tradition of the Fathers, is not merely the seat of emotions — it is the centre of one’s being, the place of encounter with God.

On this first Sunday of Lent, the Church does not speak to us first about fasting of the body; she speaks to us about fasting of the heart. And Lent begins with a choice, with a question: Where is your treasure? To answer this question, Christ proceeds — as you have heard — through four oppositions.

**Earthly treasure / Heavenly treasure • Light / Darkness • God / Mammon
• Kingdom / Anxiety**

He places us before a discernment. Earthly riches are not only money — they are everything that enslaves man: passions, addictions, the pride that overvalues the self, everything we glory in. The rust and moths of this Gospel symbolise that inner corruption. We must nonetheless clarify that Christ does not condemn money in itself, for when used in charity it becomes a blessing. What he condemns is the slavery one makes of it. And he tells us: no one can serve two masters.

It is not wealth that is dangerous — it is the divided heart. Christ therefore sets two treasures against each other: the earthly treasure, that which is perishable, which flatters the ego and feeds the passions; and the heavenly treasure, the kingdom of God.

But what is this kingdom? It is not a future place. It is the living presence of God in man. It is divine love that unifies all things. It is the Word who dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. It is the restored communion between God and man. To seek the kingdom is to seek this presence. And where this treasure is, the heart becomes luminous.

The Eye — Lamp of the Body: The eye is the lamp of the body. The Fathers teach us that the eye symbolises the gaze of the heart — the nous, the spiritual intelligence. When this gaze is purified, man recovers his inner unity. But when it is darkened by passions, the whole being becomes fragmented. The eye is the organ of discernment. If man loses this capacity, he becomes blind. “If the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness.” Lent is a school of discernment. It purifies the gaze, clarifies intention, and unifies the heart.

We fast so that the light may become light again. Sin scatters; grace gathers. Therefore Lent is a therapy — not a punishment, but a healing. Fasting, prayer and almsgiving are not legal obligations; they are means of purification. Gradually the gaze becomes simple. And in that simplicity, God reveals himself.

God and Mammon: What is Mammon? Mammon is the idolatry of riches. But more deeply, it is everything that takes the place of God. Even work can become slavery if it becomes an absolute. Christ does not condemn activity, but its idolatry. True spiritual poverty is not the absence of possessions, but the absence of attachment.

Then Christ says to us: do not worry about your life. He evokes the birds, the lilies of the field, even Solomon in all his glory. He calls us to trust, for excessive anxiety — the tumultuous rhythm of modern life that has deprived man of the sense of his existence — and outward agitation often reveal an inner poverty and betray a lack of faith. That is why Christ says “you of little faith.” The kingdom of God is not obtained by agitation; it is received through trust.

So what are the true treasures? They are the kingdom of heaven, the divine love that unifies all things — that excellent gift coming from above, from the Father of Lights, as the holy apostle James has just reminded us. It is the presence of the Word through the Spirit in our hearts. These are the true treasures. And the kingdom, I repeat, is not only future — it begins in us.

It begins in us. Seek first the kingdom of God, and all the rest will be given to you as well. This is truly the programme of Lent.

So what is fasting for us Christians? It is not merely abstinence — it is essentially and above all an incorporation into the experience of Christ. Through fasting and prayer, we are freed from our excessive dependence on matter and we rediscover our body as a temple of the divine presence. We learn respect for the body, respect for food, respect for the rhythm of life, and respect for the environment.

Evidently, the fasting of the soul is equally necessary and fundamental. What is the fasting of the soul? It is the fasting from vain distractions — above all in the Pascalian sense of the term — fasting from idle words, fasting from judgments. Thus Lent is a time of calm, a time of inner peace. It is a time to rediscover the deep meaning of our existence.

Lent does not begin on the plate — it begins in the heart.

Today, Christ asks of us a decision. Where is your treasure? If your treasure is on earth, your heart will be heavy. If your treasure is in the kingdom, your heart will become free. Let us not pass through this Lent superficially. Let us not reduce it to an outward practice. Let us

choose God concretely: an abandonment of attachment to riches, anxiety surrendered into his hands, a protected and intensified time of prayer, and a silence — a silence rediscovered.

Then the desert, the one I spoke of at the beginning, the desert will become light. Then the scattering will become unity. Then death will give way to resurrection.

May the merciful Lord enlighten our gaze and lead us to the joy of Pascha!

✠ *To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* ✠