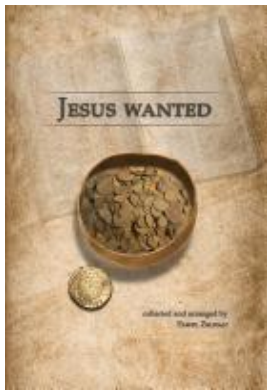


JESUS WANTED



collected and arranged by
PAWEŁ ZELWAN



Concentrating in his novelized lectures mainly on the well-known parables of Jesus, author Pawel Zelwan attempts to expose the absurdity of the concepts behind the generally accepted interpretations of the Galilean's puzzling statements. It is a book for those who value their convictions, that is to say, for those who seek a solid ground for them.

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collected and arranged by

Paweł Zelwan

translated by

Mrs. Zuzanna Sierotnik

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Guest, sit beneath my leaves and rest at ease!

Jan Kochanowski, *On the Linden Tree*¹

It is easiest to evaluate the rank of a publication by weighing its cost and gravity. They don't have to appear significant if the output of human thought and will is the work of a genius or if it is brought to daylight by an appropriately selected collective, and its reception by all is mediated by a publisher who is prepared to receive it and knows the ropes.

They grow significantly, however, when it is being created by a workman in moments free from hard everyday work at a foundry, resisting with his own body the aversion and venality of his closest environment, who develops and implements the *production plan* of his ware by himself, paying for the necessary craftsmen's services out of his own pocket.

It isn't a fate that scholars, artists or writers dream of and, therefore, the Reader should understand that the compulsion that makes me the author, *typesetter* and publisher of this book doesn't give him much right over me in the judgment of its rank if he isn't prone to similar feats.

Still, this imperative doesn't bind the Reader in any way with my authorial fancy. It rather makes the secured space of the book a modest, but brisk and truth-friendly place for a footsore or stray guest. At most it seeks in the latter for an unconstrained impression that the authorial and publishing purpose was guided by quite commonsense, and even – I would say – noble-minded premises.

The tracks of this book will lead the Reader into the unknown. He will not only have to face in it the thick-set characteristics of an alien and slightly crippled speech, but, above all, the measure of knowledge adjoining its side, which will put his own to a serious test. He won't lose if he doesn't lie his way out of the fight, because this book serves only the ruin of the convictions that are abject. Instead, it strengthens and raises, in accordance with the great law, the spirits of the truly mighty men who aren't too eloquent nor too greedy.

¹ translated by Michael J. Mikos. Jan Kochanowski was a 16th-century Polish poet (translator's note).

Because it's not chaff for trained cattle, but food and drink for weary and thirsty people, the book – being, after all, quite good news – acts as a supportive gospel discourse, not so much telling the Reader to think in a certain way, but trying to gain his distracted attention for the goods which result in life with a clarity of conscience and thoughts, insofar as the latter are directed towards the Galilean.

The norms of this discourse stand out significantly from the stock evangelistic canvas, because they're not focused on the matters that have been known and repeated for ages by the callous media and their feverish flunkies, but on the very heart of the gospel message, which is the nerve of the messianic thought and will, constituting the best reference point for a salutary reorganization of life priorities.

Therefore, the Reader can calmly sidestep the contemporary theological bore stuffing the heads of those hungry for knowledge of the Most Holy, and, making use of my *shortcuts for the poor in spirit*, reach straight for more substantial food and more reliable guidelines.

I do not doubt that while doing that, he will manage to notice serious discrepancies between the *standard* dominating the market – or rather the stereotype of Christian ministry, and the norm by which I stand with such mulishness – not because I'm a mule, but because, in my humble opinion, it serves the glory of the Eternal One much better.

Although I did what I could so that the Reader wouldn't succeed in reconciling these discrepancies, that's where my ingeniousness ends – along with the competences and authorizations belonging to it. It is the Reader's task to choose the way he is following, so even though it befits him to make use of my *facilities for the disabled*, the turn towards the right altar – like the appeal made to the court against the judgment passed on him – should be his personal effort, unaffected by my whims.

This publication should be treated a little like a map, a tuning fork, a litmus paper or another simple and handy mold or detector – it is to serve the absolute orientation of the Reader in the complex space, full of dangerous illusions and useless trash, of the contemporary competition for the title to boast before the Judge of Israel. For reasons of principle, I'm dragging at the tail end of this weird race – the Reader who knows the Old and New Testament¹ can't hold a great grudge against me for that.

¹ Mark 9:33-37

The contract between the publisher and the author of the English translation determines the limit of financial benefits on account of the distribution of this edition until the time of death of the representatives of both its parties. After that term, in accordance with my wish, all the versions of the edition, including the paper version, are to have the status of a free publication. Thus, if anyone would like to let its laborers earn some money, wanting to remain consistent with the respectable *jure caduco*, he shouldn't hesitate to buy it and inform others of the publication of this exclusive volume.

The translation has so far lacked the solid editorial support that usually accompanies the translator's workshop and conscience. The Reader should be aware of that. Likewise, he should also understand that the attempts at obtaining an appropriate trade warranty had to, in case of this volume, encounter very real and quite substantial obstacles despite the dedication of significant funds for the editorial remuneration – and it isn't only because the distinctions of the publication objectively represent a quite big intellectual challenge.

The best editor is the Reader – in line with this hidden truth I would thus like to place an advert here for the honest purchasers of the book who would be able and willing to serve its linguistic shapes. I am far from expecting miracles from the candidate – I only expect him to be a master of his trade, a guardian of good manners and – this really isn't very challenging – to be able to bargain with me.

Paweł Zelwan

Kaletnik, April 23rd, 2016

FOREWORD

Working on this book was more like the work of an editor than an author – its content is not as much the fruit of creation as of putting things in order. I would like the Reader to think of it exactly like that, because this truth will help him understand the author's intentions. The canvas of the compilation is a collection of draft essays written in the late nineties, the aim of which was to introduce my onetime dear and near ones to the discoveries – difficult to accept to me as well – of the inaccuracies in the circulating interpretation of important Scripture texts.

In its current shape, the collection is to serve the consciences of the faithful who remain under the pressure of a false judgment over the gospel testimony of truth; it is to help them to purify themselves before God, pointing out at the same time that they think wrongly about Him and don't act according to his will, because they are underhandedly directed by a mind hostile to God, turning their attention away from the priorities of the Galilean. It is, therefore, a kind of a gateway for the prisoners of convictions incompatible with the truth.

This aim will be questioned as incredible – more or less directly (and for sure it will be belittled) – so it is better for the Reader to discover my open intentions on this page, rather than be forced to base his conviction in that matter exclusively on his own or someone else's conjectures.

The character of the collection is one of a protocol of hard intellectual work. That is why the Reader shouldn't try to value its fruit contained herein higher than the labor of a not-so-well fed and mistreated slave, who, in the hard fight for survival – in which he very often stood between a rock and a hard place – didn't manage to transfer into human language what he saw, heard and understood, sufficiently well. I'm not writing this to justify my shortcomings, but only in order to supply the Reader with a measure of mercy for the judgment of my extravagances, more or less forced upon me by life circumstances. He is the one who needs such a measure – not me.

This is a book for those who, for many non-trivial reasons, can't voice the defense of their mixed, but strong hunches that Christianity isn't in

excess of truth and that this destitution serves the glory of the Kingdom worse than a carrion serves a wake of vultures. My task is only to ensure them that they are not mistaken in their feelings and shouldn't depart from their right minds to improve their ratings on the grace exchange.

Resorting to prison slang, I would induce these attentive witnesses, reserved in their judgments, to look at today's teaching of the way of the Lord as on well-known shady dealings of identity thieves, whose greed matches their blindness, and, in turn, on my own access – as on a lingering roar of a camel in the desert, behind which there can't be anything more attractive than an ordinary well that it found. This last thing may fail to encourage malcontents, but it can render good service to many a dry throat and many a head that hasn't yet grown accustomed to the silence of the Almighty.

Nowadays, youth at schools and universities have to learn about the genesis of the cosmos, the formation of continents and the origin of species through the lens of the evolutionist ideology, even though blatant evidence testifying against it is considered by the most prominent authorities in almost every experimental field of science.

However, the demand for this fiction, flattering to humankind, is too great for the children to have a right to doubt the power of its all-powerful domain at the dawn of their short lives.

I won't support their lot with my testimony – not because I'm not one of the many scholars who rightly think that the theory of evolution is a load of heavy crap and a string of distasteful affairs, suspecting in its charm spiritual dangers for the believers in the redemptive power of the Creator, but because I consider the common hypocritical obsequiousness towards it a result of much more far-sighted and much more ingenious calculations than the calculations of outstanding scholars. That is why, in agreement with common sense, with the intention of improving spiritual health, I would prescribe my neighbors a *change of diet* preceded by a rigorous fast rather than the *aspirin pill* recommended by the scholars.

For like the children in state-run schools, who – for their parents' money – learn to believe in lies about the world around them and love those lies more than the life that this world contains, Christians also encounter the inglorious privilege of paying for lies about the Savior of this world, which promote their self-satisfaction, but they neither train minds nor

toughen the will. Both the small and the great ones are flocking in to this privilege – some for small, other for big benefits – all the while thinking immodestly that they are serving and worshipping the true image of the Revealer.

It may be of little importance to you, Reader, whether the world emerged *in the blink of a great eye*, or was forming for hundreds of millions, or even billions of years, or whether the layers of sedimentary rock in the whole world constitute a fossil record of a tremendous, short catastrophe, or centuries-old natural process. If at school you didn't apply yourself to learning too much, or you had a lousy teacher, ignorance in that matter won't burden your conscience.

However, if you confess faith in the true, one God, you may have a big problem with answering a much simpler, but more grave question than the above, which you will one day be asked by the Righteous One. Remaining in accordance with the greatest law on this earth, I wish you that upon finishing the reading of my strange book you will be able to avoid both this problem and the associated inescapable confusion over the verdict of the Judge of Israel.

When editing the content entrusted to my care, which was objectively hard to put into comprehensible words, I decided to overstep the rules of otherwise reasonable typographic conventions. Hence the Reader will find in this book much more marks of emphasis than it is usually the case in literary publications.

Let the following explanation serve his orientation in its roles: I attempted to use *italics* for quotations only, whereas I reserved the *oblique font* to mark irony or purely conventional, working approximations of oftentimes very complex spiritual phenomena. A special, literal emphasis is marked with a sparse print.

This endeavor seemed purposeful to me in view of the requirement for a direct, more flexible presentation of my standpoint, and also in view of the need to *reduce my own costs*, which the readers rarely have before their eyes. The language of faith is nowadays appropriated by the all-powerful media and in order not to become one of the thousands of heads *talking in the name of the Lord* I had to make the message a little indigestible to the lovers of pseudo-godly rants.

It is not my fault that the world doesn't know the truth about its Savior. I am only to voice the defense of my own conviction and take care so that this testimony is worthy of great faith, and not great money.

I have placed remarks typical of the workshop under some of the lectures, calling them *expositions*. There the Reader can find broader references and discursive explanations shedding light on the sources of doubts which arose during an attentive reading of the taught fragments, along with significant revelations and tracks of invigorating thoughts that helped me in *cracking the source code*.

The stories themselves are cautious attempts at approaching the mysteries of faith. Most of the time they just mark the critical points relevant to the internal logic of the instruction, making use of images that aren't too sophisticated. I dedicate them to the ones better and more gifted than me in the intention of directing them to the traces of the art of fighting for survival – unknown today – of which I myself feel more like an apprentice than a teacher. Waking the alertness of their minds will be my sole trophy – truly martial indeed.

The considerable amount of footnotes is to help the Reader to find the sources of direct references to the text of the Bible, sparing him at the same time unnecessary riddles. Minimal familiarity with the gospel message, Old Testament law and the prophets will also shorten the time of *readers' pains* significantly.

Of course I know that my terms and definitions are not exactly clear. However, if the Reader also knows how hard it sometimes is to say plainly what faith, love, wisdom and suffering is – especially if someone brushed against the boundaries of the world available to human senses – I think he will forgive the author's poverty, taking from it only what's best.

I don't insist that I'm worthy of the Readers' gratitude or liking. What I do insist on is only that the content of this book is news more valuable to the Reader than my reputation. So if a rough estimate of the latter won't be too low in his eyes, I count upon it that he won't discredit the slightly costly mulishness with which I, an indocile beast, was told to speak in a human voice.

Pawel Zelwan

Kaletnik, November 16th, 2011

MOTTO

Wretched and low is the man
who has to do what he was ordered.
Great and rich is the one who can do
what was timely submitted to his sober attention
and moderate concern for daily bread.
Unworthy of life and honor are all those
who cover the tracks of great guides
and grind the toil of the little ones to the dust of the earth.



Exposition

None of the Christian denominations will live to see a deeper spiritual awakening without revising the delusive conviction at the root of their faith, that John, when editing his report of the events in Bethany, saw the cause of Jesus' pain in a reaction of sympathy towards the fellows of the deceased who were gathered there. And that's because this idolatrous vision undermines the skill of apostolic authority in the judgment of the traits of the Master's profile that John had personally discovered, and gives the lie to his testimony, which is faithful to the truth.

It is quite difficult for a sane individual to accept this commonly held conviction, if he knows the words that John used to describe the state of mind of the Galilean. Hence the translators took great care so that these words wouldn't be read in the meaning intended by the Apostle. Therefore, in almost all the translations¹ we read that Jesus *was deeply moved in spirit and troubled*. This is done to present to our eyes exactly the same picture of tenderness to essential matters that we know so well – even though it doesn't fit the scenery painted by John's pen too well.

How very human is Jesus here – the exegetes stubbornly try to convince us, preferring not to encounter in their way the modest conviction that it is the deity of Jesus that John devoted his Gospel to², rightly assuming that the future generations will sooner run out of evidence for the originality of the shapes of his thoughts and will than for the fact that *He sometimes had very human inclinations and needs*.

The account of the events in Bethany is indeed such a *basic necessity* for those following into the footsteps of the Galilean, because it highlights a nerve of the messianic attention and his way of looking that hasn't

¹ NLT conveys the meaning of the word ΕΜΒΡΙΜΑΟΜΑΙ more accurately. Polish translations emphasise the positiveness of Jesus' feelings more clearly, whereas the English vocabulary is more neutral.

However, the term used by John has a clearly negative undertone, which seems to be ignored by both English and Polish commentaries (translator's note).

² John 20:30-31

been introduced anywhere else on earth, letting everyone grasp the hierarchy of goals and values of this mysterious, unearthly newcomer. Apparently, neither the translators of the manuscripts nor the teachers care much for that if they consider shackling common sense the shorter way to the godly purpose.

I would lift these shackles, even if only a little, because I myself received more from reasonable people than from ideologists and I know the difference between good advice and a good intention – it is not uncommon for the latter to be guilty of sizeable unrestraint, and, besides that, the concern for the peace of the human soul is often absent from the scope of its attention.

Therefore, let us assume that the Reader isn't a man who was once brought to blind rage by the carelessness of his darling, and that he isn't a woman who flew into a rage at her disobedient child – let's assume that he doesn't know what heartbreak is – as well as regret, anger or disappointment caused by the actions or words of the near and dear ones that are inconsistent with clearly communicated expectations.

Let's assume that he has just been born and has in front of himself only the Bible, Strong's concordance, some gumption and a strange impression that the translators are telling him to read of *sentiment* where he sees, like the nineteenth-century scholar, an angry snort, irritation, indignation, readiness to give a stern admonition¹, and of *affection* precisely where he sees deep trouble, perplexity, intense disappointment².

The first of these two words even seems to be reserved for the extraordinary circumstance of this testimony, since it occurs in no other place in the Scripture³. Its meaning, however, can be easily described as irritation with futile persuasions evoking the image of plowing the sand.

John uses a shade of the meaning of the second of the two words when he describes the state of mind of the Master foretelling Judas' betrayal⁴, when he draws up the farewell words of the Master telling the disciples *not to be troubled* because of his departure⁵, and even writing of the *stirring* of the water in the pool to which the wretch who has been

¹ gr. ΕΝΕΒΡΙΜΗΣΑΤΟ ΤΩ ΠΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ

² gr. ΕΤΑΡΑΞΕΝ

³ This isn't entirely true – it is also used

by Matthew and Mark (translator's note).

⁴ John 13:21

⁵ John 14:1

incapacitated by infirmity for thirty eight years could never make it in time¹! It is something entirely else than a *sentiment of the spirit* caused by compassion for the suffering of its neighbors.

Even if the Reader isn't someone tested in his adversities, which would mean that he's poor in the substance that is used to create comparisons and analogies with the experience of the Master, it won't be difficult for him to notice the absurdity of the commonly propagated cause for his behavior in the light of the meanings of the key words that he has discovered in the original – as compared to the cause that's called by its name by John, for which this faithful witness furnished us with simple reasons in the form of the sequence of events that, taken together, were hard to bear even for the Holy One.

My story is an unsophisticated fictionalization of these reasons, aiming at emphasizing their effect, which was traumatizing to the soul of the Master, culminating in the inspired message by the description of a burst of tears, which is always a sort of relief in the suffering that one is going through – to the small ones and the great alike.

A blubberer cries for any reason or out of fear – a great commander and warrior cries when the ones he is fighting for prefer the boozy meals at the enemy's rear. It's a fundamental difference; what connects them in the weak flesh is only the desire for relief.

In John's account, contrary to the appearances that were being created for ages, there is nothing strange or extraordinary – nothing that would demand of the Reader any mental acrobatics, the traces of the sense and goal of which are impossible to find in the Scripture. By no means: exact parallels with Jesus' state of mind in Bethany are provided by the rich prophetic prints which clearly and distinctly show the causes of the sadness and anger of the servants of the living God, not as in agreement with the intuition and calculations of their contemporaries, but in permanent and painfully intense conflict with them.

The paradox of the modern mendacity is that it denies John's testimony credibility as concerns the state of the thoughts and feelings of the Originator of faith, while simultaneously holding in careful esteem the Old Testament testimonies of very similar moments in the lives of

¹ John 5:7

those smaller than Him – because they weren't as offending as the Christ – people of great faith and great need to know the truth. It requires truly unearthly peace to look at this state of affairs without fear, especially that the passionate censorial arrogance that I point out is invariably accompanied by a very limited sense of humor and manners that could hardly be described as courtly.

Its proponents will do well to read on these pages the author's *wish of death*¹ before they meet with the fate that the Righteous One prepared for those who deserve it in their hypocrisy for entangling their neighbors in their own disgrace and apostasy.

December 18th, 2011

¹ Mark 9:42

Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

[...]

And He said, "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, «Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.» So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, «How many of my fathers hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'»

So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, «Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.»

But the father said to his slaves, «Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.»

And they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be.

And he said to him, «Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.» But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.

But he answered and said to his father, «Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.»

And he said to him, «Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.

But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.»"

THE SWINEHERD

On his way to Jerusalem, the Messiah persistently resisted the idolatrous salutes to his acclaimed excellence. The Pharisees could afford to treat the Master to a meal and show a cautious interest in his views. They were flattered by the presence of the prominent Teacher, followed by multitudes wanting to hear another parable and see another miracle. Before they decided to kill Him, they had probably deliberated for a long time on how to convince Him to constructively cooperate in national liberation.

The power that He demonstrated and the time that He devoted to the needy could, in their view, be surely made better use of in the fight with the Roman occupier. According to them, however, Jesus didn't suffer the burden of good manners. This carpenter's son didn't much value the accolades and signs of good will of the rulers, who, after all, humbly endured his reprehensible quirks.

"Glutton and drunkard,"¹ is probably what the more understanding ones said. "After all, that's not such a big deal, but at least he could eat and drink with his equals²; he could have a little respect and care for his own dignity, and not for that of others."

Coveters always had a hard time bearing the presence of God's messengers. In the opinion of the Pharisees, however, a hellhound was only he who was making himself equal with God. For the thought that God could lower himself to the tax collectors and sinners³ and accept their service and hospitality⁴ was inconceivable and blasphemous to them. Jesus showed real patience, worthy of our attention, to these envious and mendacious priests daring to shove the law that He had established in his face. And his divine authority was acknowledged after his death precisely by those who, having experienced his presence, understood that God repaid them with bread for stone.

¹ Luke 7:31-35

² Luke 7:36-39

³ Luke 15:1

⁴ Luke 19:1-10

This heavenly profligate, entirely stripped of the glory and honor that He took from the Father, gave us the only example of the love and humility that is befitting to the saints¹. It is hard for us to admit – even though we sometimes think so – that the parable of the spendthrift son has gotten old and doesn't concern us anymore, and even if there's something in it that captivates us, we don't know how to draw from it. Yes, we are moved, even to the point of affection, by the image of the repentance of the poor wretch whom his brother begrudged a welcome feast, but we are unwilling to notice in its words something more than a moral lesson for Jesus' enemies.

The younger son is to us, at most, an uplifting example of a reveler who settled down, a rebel who at last – and to our indescribable satisfaction – admitted that nothing remained for him but the saving fate of a hired man. We are flattered by the conviction that, like this sinner and desecrator, we are behind the gate, and, having repented, by God's will we have become indispensable instruments of grace. *"After all, if we sinned, then not as bad as this one, who squandered his father's wealth – God forbid! – with harlots."*

But what the Master wanted wasn't that those who He spoke to would become decent overnight. Instead, He assured them that the evil that was hopelessly burdening their consciences before God would fall into oblivion if they put their trust and their hopes in Him. That is why, whenever we see in this great parable only a pitiful sinner and his brother, jealous of the father's favors, we only notice what the Pharisees saw: a story of a wise man who could in no way be contradicted. Ordinary human feelings make us have at least as much pity for the spendthrift son as for ourselves. Ordinary doesn't mean – contemptible. And, with one word, Jesus pulls short the blasphemers who have long gotten rid of them. For He knows that only he who loves his brother can love God.

But He is also saying much more to those who are already somewhat versed in the alphabet of faith and know that the truth doesn't kill, but it sets free, cutting the bonds of wickedness like a sword. And that's something that the Pharisees don't even dream of, because they have been blinded by murderous hatred. They don't understand that the Father's

¹ Matthew 11:27-30

fortune isn't money, and that the younger son didn't make that much of a fool of himself by misappropriating his share and running with outlaws.

"Harlots are the worst of human beings, worse than tax collectors, cranks and drunkards, worse than pigs" – that's what the experts in the law think. The Righteous One knows that and abases himself before the judges of this earth more than they can suppose. Today, we are also somewhat disturbed by the thought that a man can be willing to seem, to the eyes of those he loves, lower and less clean than the dirtiest of creatures. And he can have a really important purpose for that: to prove more human than all those who are as proud as gods.

Pigs, even though they have a taste for wallowing in the mud, have tasty meat, and until the time when somebody wishes to ascertain that, these unrefined creatures are provided with daily sustenance. Still, in the days of crop failure, the swineherd proved to be useless and too demanding. In the eyes of his employers he didn't even deserve the locust beans called pods¹.

And the Spirit of Jesus speaks to all those unrelenting in their spite gently, but firmly: *"Had the Father sent rescue for the pigs, a pig would hang on the cross. If the sinners were really as impure and repulsive as you think, on the cross you would see someone impure."*

And although nowadays even children know that Jesus died innocently, He himself acted as if He had defiled himself in the presence of the Father with the most abject of crimes. That's why the fate of the father's hired men was, in the eyes of the son, better than his own, seasoned with bitterness and yearning. For the hired men could at least sleep the sleep of the just, whereas the Son of Man found rest only at the moment of his death, disgracing his honor.

"I am no longer worthy to be called your son," says the faithful son in the parable in front of those who consider themselves God's elect and want to prove it by desecrating his incarnate image. And two thousand years later we are presented with the protocol of passion written down by witnesses, where the Messiah in the garden is grasped by an excruciating fear² at the thought that He now is to renounce the so far immaculate glory of God's sonship; He is to become, in people's eyes, a passive vic-

¹ Luke 15:16

² Matthew 26:36-39; Luke 22:40-44

tim, even though that's not what He is. He knows perfectly well that if, so far, He has tasted humiliation and contempt for his majesty, it was merely a foretaste of the disgrace in which even the Holy Father is now deserting Him and turning his eyes away from Him.

He who knew no sin knew best of all the living that the real dignity is the dignity of the Father's elevation – the same that draws the faithful to lose their souls for Him even today. The same that, by stripping itself on earth from what is due to it, fulfills by that the only law honored by the Father – the law of grace. We are the stewards of this grace, so it befits us to know the life and work of our gracious benefactor, who didn't come to judge us, but to save us from ourselves.

For this reason, although it's not quite convenient for us, let's try to see those two sons more clearly. Let's look less reprovingly at the supposed infamies and debauchery of the Son of Man, whose only good deed on this earth was, allegedly, that *at the end he came to his senses and returned to his father's dwellings*. Yes, it was the end of his journey, but the beginning of ours.

In this parable, never entirely understood, both sons have equal rights, but one of them holds a grudge against his father, saying that he has never got from his hands what he deserved in all those years; he denies his own brother a worthy treat and denies his father the joy of his return. Whereas the second son, knowing the generosity of the father's heart, asks for the share of the estate that falls to him (that is due to him!), squanders it with unworthy ones, and, rejected by them, asks once more for that which is most precious – to be able to be with the father, even as a farmhand. They both knew the will of the father, but only one of them wanted the father to be proud of him and say, "*Sit at my right hand.*"

Because the Son fulfilled the will of the Father, realizing his unfathomable design of mercy over sinners. Thanks to Him, people learned the name of the Holy One and many of them were adopted as sons through faith in the Son. Only the devil doesn't like the Father's thoughts and even a mere supposition that somebody can surpass him in his merits for the throne fills him with fury and venom, and it contorts his ingratiating and servile visage into a grimace of holy indignation.

The bad servant thinks badly of his master. He measures and judges him by his own standards, and he suspects that God is so malicious that

He wants to humiliate him and treats him like he treats the ones lesser than himself. Not for anything would he make an effort to do what his brother ventured only so that he could share with the Father the joy at the sight of backs straightening out and human eyes glittering with hope. The bad servant will always try to make our life repugnant to us, and he will always think that everybody should appreciate his toil and anguish endured for the ungrateful father.

The good servant, no matter how poor and deprived of his honor, will obscure his harm. He will never want others to be as afraid as he is afraid or to suffer as he suffers. In every place and time, he will find enough strength to show the way to the strayed, to give drink to the thirsty and to nourish the hungry. He won't hurl abuse at the heavens that they're ripping him off even from the scraps, because when indeed not even a scrap of royal honor is left him, and they cast lots for his garment, he will see from afar the father running to him. He will hug him not for confessing guilt, but for accomplishing the father's will.

No one will accuse him anymore that he expended the wealth he had been given. Even on earth wise fathers teach their children not to denounce others, because a denunciator always bears bad testimony of his father.

One day we will understand better this love that speaks to the reprobate as gently as possible:

*"Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.
But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours
was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found."*¹

The parable ends with this patient persuasion, which here was to remain unanswered. Because only the Son of Man met the love of the Father halfway by praying in the garden of Gethsemane²:

*"I have manifested Your name to the men
whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours
and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.
Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me
is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them;*

¹ Luke 15:31-32

² John 17:6-10

*and they received them and truly understood
that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.
I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world,
but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;
and all things that are Mine are Yours,
and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them."*

Only the Beloved Son didn't let the wealth obscure the Owner, for He knew that life and truth are indivisible and there is no fork in the way to the Father. Satan didn't benefit from the explanation, because he never intended to say to the Creator: "*Things that are Mine are Yours.*" Neither was he going to ask for anything, because dependence is a disgrace to him.

Jesus didn't delude himself that He would convince the Pharisees. Even his disciples didn't manage to get rid of rebellious zeal while He was still alive. But He left to all his listeners a seed. They were to be reminded of its existence and power by the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, which was called the way and life by the Master himself. And the bread that He broke during the last meal was to bring to human hearts and thoughts an image of the greatest goodness that has visited our vale.

Satan fell from heaven like lightning, because the joy of the people whose burdens were to be removed wasn't to his liking. Today the miscreant is restrained only by the Holy Spirit, because only the Father, who fulfilled his promise, cares that we don't rashly take to court all that our eyes see and our ears hear, but ask for our share of the Father's estate, because only by drawing from God's fullness can we rescue others from destruction.

In this world you pay for everything, even for the truth, because, in order to hear it, you have to reckon with the one who is preaching it. But grace, like the water of life, is free. And it befits the witnesses and the partakers in the resurrection, who have forgiven those who had trespassed against them, to make efforts to convince others of the same. Because the calamity of our unfaithful neighbors consists in the fact that they think of the Father like the elder son from Jesus' parable.

Our advantage over them – the only one – is that we know whom we serve, and they don't. Let's not rashly dictate to them what they can eas-

ily notice by themselves – but only when the younger son draws them. For younger means lesser. However, Christ won't draw them if they don't see his image in us, who are human like them. If we don't happen to stand calmly when everyone is running and run when everyone's standing, keep silent when everyone's got something to say, and speak when everyone falls silent. It is not contrariness that is to inspire us, but the Spirit, who is Lord. From Him, and only from Him, evil scurries away like vermin when one removes a rock from its place.

The Pharisees couldn't understand how one could squander mercy like this. Neither did the apostles understand that, seeking priority in merits for the Kingdom. But after the death of the Messiah, through the Holy Spirit, it turned out that they remembered the most important lessons perfectly. And when Satan sent them Ananias and Sapphira, Peter didn't stammer when he was passing a just judgment on them in front of witnesses¹.

For, having brought the money to the apostles, they presented a part as the whole, similarly to those who *give their whole lives to Jesus* every two weeks, but they silently pant for revenge when regular human experience diminishes a little the brilliance of the crown that they have put on their own heads. If someone is afraid of peoples' judgments, it means that he is their prisoner and won't stand in the judgment of God.

A thousand years before, king David, ordered by a prophet, bought from a servant a threshing floor along with the cattle, in order to build an altar of atonement there to stop the plague on the people². He could have had all this for free, because he was the lord and shepherd of his people, but he stopped the zeal of the inhabitant of Jerusalem who would willingly have contributed from his own purse in order that the wealth of his king and priest would not be diminished. Led by a prophetic intuition, David preserved the testimony of the living God, who doesn't demand gifts and doesn't cry for help, because it's Him who grants help and bestows gifts.

That servant didn't know what his master was doing, but he obeyed him. Ananias and Sapphira knew and disobeyed. Firm evidence of that is the fact that they concealed the true sum obtained from selling their

¹ Acts 5:1-11

² 2 Samuel 24:21-24

property, as if having something of their own would defile them in the eyes of the Owner of heaven and earth.

Following the suggestion of the elder son from the parable, they wanted to seem clean to the Father, whom they considered blind and a tightwad, in order to be able to elevate themselves above the poor and deprived of honor, whereas God accepted the outlaws based on faith in the only one who fulfilled the law. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit pointed without fail to Peter these idolaters, whose deceptive intentions were aimed at the young and still weak church.

* * *

The children of wrath aren't able to forgive and don't want to, because forgiveness inevitably strips them of the glory in which they shamelessly parade; because, instead of gods believing in man, it turns them into humans believing in God. The children of wrath don't want to be humans. They are like dry, proudly protruding branches that bring no fruit. They flaunt what they have and don't even mention what they lack. They will point out others' wants in order to pester them, but they won't cover their nakedness with their own cloak.

Some of them will be broken by the wind, and then, if they ask, someone will appear by their side – someone who won't despise them. If they have even the slightest flicker of hope, he won't extinguish it, but he will fan it and shelter from the raging gale with his own body. May we happen to be close to these most wondrous events on the earth, when a stony human heart comes to life and says, laboriously at first, as if it was learning the alphabet: *"Yes, I am human, and You, only You, Jesus, are God."* But if the testimony of someone else's faith is to fill us with joy, it is befitting for us to remain people who know God, and not to pretend to be gods who know about people. For the gods of this earth, like human lusts, are insatiable themselves, so they can't satiate others.

Let us, therefore, sit down in the privacy of our homes and look into the *famous parable of a known man*, considered God by some, and let's once again repeat to ourselves this commonplace tale of dishonor and glory. If this time we also happen to graciously *turn a blind eye to the frolics and rollicking feasts of the spendthrift son*, let us consider to whom we showed our forbearance and mercy. It may turn out that the one who

received them was ... the Son of Man; that the more zealous or slothful ones, by hastily taking pity on the moral destitution of the supposed lecher, were trying, at any price, to forgive the One who died for us! And that indeed is a hard nut to crack, even for the healthiest of teeth.

Reason will tell us that maybe it isn't worth the bother, because *attempts to forgive Jesus for his awful reputation and not very refined taste* might turn out too costly for us. The Holy Spirit will reaffirm to us that, in any case, his Father with the angels rejoice the most because of a sinner's repentance. We should be content with the view of a softening face, an attentive gaze and a readiness to fight. It is more than a miracle anyway – it's faith.

And what about the harlots? Well, on the whole they can count, but they got it slightly wrong. Because they appraised their bodies poorly and live on human instead of God's grace, which doesn't throw wages and tacky trinkets on the table, but pours itself abundantly on bodies and souls redeemed with blood.

The Lord Jesus got us to understand that we would know the intentions of the wolves in sheep's clothing by the fruit of their faith. Listening to them, one could get the impression that they are personally indifferent to what they're saying and who they're talking to, if only they are being listened to, because without a hearing they are nothing. Their fruit will be sour, their jokes mean and uninspired, and their advice will turn out to be thorny wisps that will add to our anguish and bitterness instead of lessening them and making our short lives sweeter.

It will be hard for us to rest in their presence. If they were made speechless, they wouldn't know what to do with themselves, because they don't have God and people before their eyes, but empty-ringing words which they higgledy-piggledy assemble in the vanity of their minds. Someone else's consistent thought and hearty feeling will always be a threat to those who want to ensnare souls and rule them, instead of saving them, because they push and scare instead of drawing and reassuring.

They sigh for mountain climbing and spiritual heights, but we will never hear from their lips a mere human warning which tells a tired pilgrim that his companion knows the way that he has travelled himself. They don't betray their plans to us easily, but we will learn them from the parable of our shepherd, who not only knows the direction of his

journey, but also the plans of his adversary who was defeated at Golgotha.

And it is the latter one to whom it matters very much for us to deem the thorny glory road of the younger son a pardonable mistake, a vital failure and bankruptcy, which is overshadowed by the father, but not rewarded. So that we never, ever come to think that this sworn *brawler* and favorite of truly beautiful women had in him something irresistible – something that transcends all understanding. For the real hell spawn is the one who always enjoys our repentance but never the truth that illuminates our faces.

The elder brother slandered the younger, saying that he was philandering, but today we know that this isn't true and that the Wise One who told this story, and in it introduced to the attentive listeners himself and his adversary, is the Lord of the universe. Satan isn't equal to godless people, but to powerful angels, and only Jesus has the power to crush him under our feet. He was set above the heavens by the Father himself, who didn't leave us without counsel and might. This exaltation is out of our league – let's leave that to the Most High.

What does belong to us is the greatest authority to judge in heaven and on earth. The Son of Man gave it to us and showed us how to use it. Along with it, we also received freedom, without which we would know neither that we can keep our life, nor that we can lose it. The man who knows that he can resist the highest good and love is in God's hand; it's grace that has restored him to freedom, so he has reasons to be thankful, because he's alive, and *a live dog is better than a dead lion*¹. Only the dead don't make mistakes. And this proverbial dog will follow its master to the end of the world out of sheer gratitude.

Therefore, as long as we're alive, let's not be ashamed of the spendthrift son, but let's follow his example. For then the slanders of his super-frugal brother won't reach us. Let's lead a loose life, let's run with anybody, at best with those not worthy of our pity². Let's loose the chains imposed by the rulers of this earth. Let's not give less than forgiveness, because only love – like a father's cloak – covers over a multitude of sins.

¹ Ecclesiastes 9:3-6

² Luke 14:12-14

Sometimes the wronged and humiliated ones have to be the first to welcome their enemies. It is precisely then that they follow into Christ's footsteps – when they know that their suffering is underserved and their wrongdoers know not what they do. And when they never do this, or only once in a blue moon, and that for show, it would be better for them not to pretend that they have something in common with the dishonor of the Redeemer, because they'd go off their heads.

Rebellion is a human thing, but mendacity is a brand of the devil. When working in the vineyard, it's the actions that count, not the words. And a map, even the best one, won't stand for the journey. God supports everybody, even the biggest cowards, if they finally get up from their arts and crafts in the privacy of their homes and put their hands to the plow. Only the beaten know that they can get up. Only sinners know that they're alive.

It is Christ who convinced us that we were not fit for an offering to God, even though many see us as lamentable victims of fate. We, however, know that we are not clean enough to the Father. They rightly see us as convicts, because we consciously accepted the just decree and we're waiting for death as for life. There's only one thing they don't understand: why we are sometimes so merry.

And when the Good Shepherd comes to get us, their today's amazement will turn into a whine, a cry to heaven, that those taken up weren't those who deserved it. That grace was obtained *illegally* (without their consent, and even – how outrageous! – to their utter surprise) by simpletons, losers, profligates and other *wreckers of public order* – people who didn't feel like participating in the grand matters of the passing world.

Then nobody will be convincing anybody of anything anymore. For the elder brother had already heard why he shouldn't be angry with the younger one a long time ago. And the younger one knew his father even before the foundation of the world, because He and the Father are one¹. Those who do his will, will recognize Him², and the despised and humiliated will be guided by the hope that often blinks at a *fool*³.

March 26th, 1998

¹ John 10:24-30

² John 7:15-18

³ 1 Corinthians 1:22-29



Exposition

The moral judgment of the conduct of the younger son from the probably most famous of the Master's parables is nowadays rather beyond public dispute. Voices on both the inside and the outside of Christian denominations (often very much divided in matters of secondary or even slight importance) never question this particular judgment.

We should consider why it is so, if even with a cursory reading of the parable, an attentive reader has to come to a conclusion that qualifying the dissipation of the patrimony as a sin against God, even if it would be all spent on carnal pleasures, is a gross exaggeration.

How is the deed of the profligate different from – let's say – the deed of a thief, a killer or an adulterer? The answer is that this deed, or rather attitude to life, in contrast to the other ones, doesn't do anybody harm, so it doesn't collide with the greatest (and if we look more closely, with any) of Moses' commandments.

Why is it then that for centuries both believers and unbelievers have wanted to see in the lot of the younger son the image of human abjection and moral decline (even though it has very little in common with the true fall), and in the eyes of his father the readiness to forgive the faults of his offspring (even though it finds no expression in the mouth of the great master)?

What is the profligacy of the younger son? Is it the anti-pattern of true godliness, or maybe its most vivid embodiment, carried in the hearts of this world's greatest ones?

Who is the elder of the two sons: a small jealous man or a deceitful minion of slander to the ones who believe in the power of the secret order given to the younger one by the father?

Finally, why did Jesus tell this story exactly when – as Luke claims – He was being surrounded by the tax collectors and sinners – the people repudiated by the contemptuous judgment of the teachers of the law?

A detail of this extraordinary parable that is probably easiest to spot (and which has the power to sow in the alert mind the seed of blessed doubt) is the distinction – blurred in most translations (it is retained in the Polish Brest Bible and Jakub Wujek's translation of the Vulgate)¹ – between the term used by Jesus when referring what the profligate had done with the share of the Father's wealth that fell to him and the expression used by the elder brother when accusing the younger one of roguery.

This difference isn't trifling. It is serious, and even those who don't mince words too much should make a reasonable choice here.

For the narrator says²: *the younger son scattered*³ his share: like Ezekiel scatters his hair to the wind, demonstrating the foretold scattering of the unfaithful Israel⁴, or like God, who in his anger scatters those who are proud in their inmost thoughts⁵.

The meaning of this word is based on the root of the noun *body* (in the sense of a *trunk, shape*) and it is invoked in many places of the Scripture where something or someone *divides the body into pieces* (disintegrates, but doesn't annihilate). For sure it lacks a moral connotation – it is a basic word, accurate and handy, but in itself it can't serve evaluation.

At the very most, it can serve as a hint for a criterion of judgment. For example, when somebody is scattering grain, the judgment of his action depends on what he's doing it for – to sift it, to sow it or to cause it never to fall into the life-giving soil. The point is, in itself it doesn't define moral value.

However, the less friendly of the presented characters says⁶, *my brother wasted*⁷ the father's wealth, making him by that a selfish degenerate of a noble dwelling, deserving his miserable fate. It's quite the opposite of the previous meaning. It was used by Jesus when He spoke of de-

¹ It is also retained in Young's Literal Translation (translator's note).

² Luke 15:13

³ gr. ΔΙΕΣΚΟΡΠΙΣΕΝ – *dispersed, separated, scattered*

⁴ Ezekiel 5:1-10

⁵ Luke 1:49-53

⁶ Luke 15:30

⁷ gr. ΚΑΤΑΦΑΓΩΝ – *destroyed, devoured, ate up, guzzled, consumed, squandered*

vouring widows' houses¹, and Paul, when he scolded the Galatians for biting and devouring each other, instead of building each other up².

It points to the self-centered conduct that everybody knows perfectly well, containing also an evident moral qualification of the deed: such an intention can never serve anything that bears the name of good.

In my opinion, it is the false judgement of the prerogatives of God's servants that is the subject of this parable – and the next one as well³. This judgment is aimed at discrediting their undisputed contributions: to the good name of the father who loves sinners or to the dignity of the rich man who wasn't as concerned with the state of his claims as it could be inferred from the denunciation. Finally, wasting the possessions by the manager obviously meant trouble for the debtors.

That is exactly why Jesus makes this distinction, which is eagerly re-touched by the cherishers of the whims of the so-called *church fathers* to this day.

The second of the circumstances demythologizing the prophetic parable in my eyes is tied to the direct manifestation of will of the participants of the meeting that are dear to each other.

The son confesses to the father a sin against him and against heaven⁴. . . . I understand that he could be aware of transgressing against the law of patrimony that was known to him. How, however, should we explain the double assertion of offences against heaven?! How could he know that he was sinning against heaven if he had never been there?

Should we, in defense of the commonly accepted understanding of the parable, ascribe oratory to the swineherd or to the narrator of the story? I think not. It is much simpler and much more honest towards the Master to assume that the swineherd knew perfectly well what he was talking about.

Besides, which of the sinners claims in the act of contrition that he is no longer worthy to be called his father's son?! If he had been son before he sinned, then he isn't a sinner, because sinners are adopted as sons by the Father only when they believe the warranty of the Spirit embodied in the Firstborn. Why, these are the fundamentals of Christian

¹ Matthew 23:14

² Galatians 5:14-17

³ Luke 16:1-17

⁴ Luke 15:21

theology. Whereas the parable is speaking very clearly of the realities of the family ties as precedent to the supposed embezzlement.

It can't be put together while asserting that the spendthrift son is a *sinner living in ignorance of the decrees and the will of the Holy One*. No healthy child will digest this fairy tale.

It is also hard to find any gesture of forgiveness on the part of the father. Yes, the original tells us clearly about the agitation and compassion of the parent, which is understandable to all, but there is no mention of forgiving the faults of a *rioter converted to the right way*.

It is also worthwhile to pay attention to the minor, but clear premise speaking for the Father's firm sanction – not of the reprimand for bad conduct, but of commendation and a well-earned reward for the stubborn prince who was hungry and covered in dung.

The father orders that the incomer be given sandals, a ring and ... literally, the foremost robe¹. Not the *best*, but the first of all, not that which is of the best material, but the one that a special personage is entitled to wear, and not some, pardon the expression, *shady-looking, lecherous tramp who came to his senses a little too late*.

Assuming that the unmistakable honor indeed served the soul and the body of the lecher, it is also worth asking ourselves the question how many foremost robes are provided in heaven for the sinners and whether it is certain that there will be enough for those who shun the exemplary *licentiousness* of the profligate.

When reading this verse, for many years, I've invariably had the impression that the flattery for the human soul, which, like an elixir of life, has been sipped through a devilish straw for many ages by Christian domains out of an imaginary identification of their own fate with the lot and destiny of the spendthrift son, doesn't come from the wish for forbearance for their own or even someone else's moral laxity as much as from a much less godly hope for being honored by the Father in the way the Son was received by Him – the Son who was dead and is alive again, and who, in my opinion, had in mind something entirely different than what the teachers of the law, taking the elder brother's judgment of the younger one at face value, could have expected from Him.

¹ gr. ΠΡΩΤΗΝ – the first in time, place
or as regarding importance

After all, it is considered obvious until today that the royal splendor falls straight to converted sinners and that, on an aquiline heights, it doesn't demand better references than those trumped up in Sunday school. It is an obvious consequence of confusing the fundamental notions of faith in God's Son.

Towards the end, I will take the liberty of evoking the original reading of the sentence that was adopted to be considered as the moment of the *right, salutary decision* of the alleged renegade. It reads, "*Having risen, I will go on unto my father, and will say to him...*",¹ which can be disassembled into: "*When I rise, I will go...*" For in the original there are no – as the translators want it for incomprehensible reasons – two equal verbs, there is no: *I will get up and go...* In the place of the first one there is a perfect participle, which clearly indicates not as much a will, as knowledge of the swineherd concerning what will soon pass upon him.

Therefore, when the swineherd rises², he will go to the father and tell him that he has sinned and isn't worthy to be called who he is, and that only the will of the parent can restore him to his rights.

Is it, then, really so hard to assume that the God-fearing prince deprived himself of all that he had and all that he was, consciously becoming someone lower than the creatures fattened for slaughter (for which there was even no place in the Israelite menu, let alone the temple of Jerusalem), and, after consuming to the end his real destitution, not knowing sin, became sin in the intention of redeeming from it through faith the elect of his great parent?

Why is it that, when reading this magnificent parable, illustrating by Luke's thought and will the deep meaning of the exemplary sacrifice of Christ³, Christians forget about the canon of apostolic teaching⁴?

It is good and wise to count upon influential acquaintances during the resurrection. It is, however, very stupid to expect the understanding of the King of spirits for such blatant ignorance in the matter of what He considers good and bad himself ... Very stupid and very bad.

¹ The conformity of the transcription in the YLT to Greek syntax is a rare exception among the translations (translator's note).

² gr. ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣ – the same word is used by the

evangelists writing about *rising from the dead*

³ Philippians 2:4-11

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:21; 8:9

And, finally, a fundamental question arises: Is one of the most elementary convictions of Christians, upon which thousands of sermons and instructions were constructed – the conviction that the way of the younger son is something to be ashamed of, and not to follow – the foundation of their own sense of identification with the will and authority to judge of the Galilean?

I say it is. And even though I drank a few beers with *tax collectors and sinners*, and embraced a few *women of easy virtue*, still I don't envy those of them who, one fine day, will have to explain this conviction of theirs to the Judge of Israel. Because of them I wouldn't like to see that day. Because of the truth I long for it to come soon.

July 24th, 2011

GOLD FOR THE BOLD

The saleswoman looked weary and a little embarrassed by my presence. The bread that she handed me bore the same price as it had for a long time, written with two big digits: a one and a seven. I was her regular and kind customer exclusively because of this bread.

I guess she knew that, because her face displayed resentment and discouragement when she mentioned that it was the last time that I was getting my favorite loaf. Now it was to be on subscription and the saleswoman wasn't sure if she would be ordering it at all, as if she could no longer afford to credit the purchases of the – few after all – clients whom she provided with this batch – exceptionally good, but hard to get.

She said *it was hard, the times were hard*. She looked the other way, troubled, as if she was ashamed of wanting to earn a living and a decent sustenance, and this bread cost her too much effort. She was quite pretty, so it was fairly easy for me not to show her sympathy in her perplexity. I didn't ask whether it was one advance payment, or some installments.

"It's not for me anyway," I thought. "But why? Why am I to again forsake with sadness this place, one of the few that I enter gladly? Why doesn't it pay for that woman to order something that I would walk through the whole city on foot in search of? Has she even ever tried this bread? I doubt it. She wouldn't be explaining herself to me."

Suddenly I saw the baker, stealthily making his way through the night like a criminal – he was almost naked, with just some sheet tied around his waist, as if he was covering his body not out of shame, but out of consideration for the belated passers-by. Anyway, I don't know, maybe he needed it for something¹.

There was no doubt about it: he was hiding. He would change his whereabouts, and even his identity, so that some guardians of lawfulness wouldn't catch him at shady and illegal dealings in grace. He was fast and elusive to human hands – like a fish; one could tell that he valued his thankless job. A born craftsman – one would like to say. He even

¹ John 13:4-5

made it without a helper. He was making and tirelessly distributing his merchandise, as if he never intended to use the services of merchants and middlemen.

I grasped in a moment why the saleswoman avoided my gaze and offered me, as if in passing, images that were supposed to justify her decision in my eyes. She didn't like this baker. She preferred merchandise about and for which one didn't have to ask¹, and he was like a ghost – unpredictable and inexorable. The thought of his unrelenting, secret slavish toil was all the more troubling to her conscience. So troubling that sometimes she wished that he had never been born.

The baker was a poor man, indeed, a little crazy, because instead of delivering his merchandise the way that other wholesale traders and producers did – in broad daylight and upon receipt – he insisted to give out bread by night, for free, to everyone he met. Just as if he renounced himself.

She had to exert herself a lot to have this titbit, sought-for by gourmets, also on her modest shelf. So she tried to extract the loaves from night tramps, to whom they were sort of falling from the sky. She was telling each one:

*"Give it to me, and I will pay you its price in silver."*²

She disguised herself well for these night expeditions; she meticulously put on makeup, so that no one would notice her sallow complexion and the flush that inevitably betrayed her excitement³, so none of the ragamuffins leaning against the weak street lamps made a complaint or cursed her. On the contrary, it was said:

"What a good and generous lady. We had nothing, and now, at least, we have a little money. How obliging she is – she doesn't mind doing this at night ... And what manners – quite royal, not like that cranky baker, forcing upon us some bread with anguish in his voice. He would probably have killed us if we didn't take it. But we've done him the favor. Let this weirdo know that even beggars can afford a good deed. Let him think that what he does

¹ Amos 8:4-12

² 1 Kings 21:1-7

³ Proverbs 7:6-23

is worth something in our eyes. Maybe it will make it easier to this moron. One has to be a human. At last, this beautiful and merciful lady noticed us. It's good that at least in her eyes we too are worth something¹. Finally we can enter a shop now. We will wipe the smiles from our neighbors' faces when they see us with shopping bags. We will show them what we're made of!"

I never paid for this bread – I had no such intention. The saleswoman knew that I knew that this bread was for free and charging anything for it was unlawful – one didn't need to smile, say "thank you" or oblige oneself. So I would come and take it, and she would give it to me without a word – after all, she knew God's law as well. Her only payment was the fact that it lay among other batches with other prices and among hundreds of various wares in beautiful and ugly packages, so that everyone who saw it would think to himself:

"My God, how much I want this bread – I'm so hungry and it's lying there on the shelf. I can't just take it, can I? That would be dishonest. This woman is working hard for her sustenance. I must somehow earn it, deserve it, make up with my wife and apologize to the boss, find a job, start a new life. I have to stop rummaging through trash, because you can find everything there, but no money. I have to stop bumming around at night and at least try to look decent, because otherwise they will drive me away before I gather the courage to steal it."

I thought that it was, after all, ungenerous of her. I knew that this bread was already paid for – much more than the Rockefeller Institute could give. But others don't know that and even though they look at this costly loaf, the thought doesn't even cross their minds to say:

"Give it to me. Give it to me now! I'm hungry."

They are so well-mannered that if a raven shoved a piece of bread in their face, it would be to them too black to be real. They tied their hands with a compliant waiting for a stroke of fate², because they are flattered,

¹ Galatians 4:17; 6:12-14

² Isaiah 65:11-12; Zephaniah 1:11-14

and not struck, by the judgment of the rich who consider them as sheep to be slaughtered.

That's why I decided to follow the example of that baker, so that, in a dark night, at least some would get at least a crumb of this bread. I will wake the drunkards sitting in gates, pull pilferers and pimps by the arm and compel women of easy virtue, I will be importunate and shameless.

I will run through all the backstreets of the great city of fornication and push to all the outlaws a bite of this heavenly baking with the words:

*"Take and eat, all of you. All of you!
This is my body, which is given for you."*

... let this merchant of the Word of God perish miserably, and her disgraceful dealings come to light with the coming day.

Since that time I have plenty of bread, because I'm doing exactly what that baker whom I saw did. But when it does happen that I suffer from hunger, I call him, and he comes right away and says:

*"Here you are, eat your fill, don't leave any of it until morning¹,
for I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

This slave reminds me of someone. Someone very faithful and beautiful. He once told me a word about the Father, and I believed Him, because as He spoke, shackles suddenly fell from my hands and legs, and the iron band, put on the biggest villains on earth, let go. He assured me that the Father had work even for the meanest ones. And I had already almost lost hope that someone would tell me:

*"Come, I need you². You will get a whole denarius in gold.
Just remember: Gold is for the bold who go after the heavens
and don't sell the secrets they were entrusted with to the enemy."*

* * *

I have met the baker recently. He was busy. There were fewer and fewer freeloaders and he had to post his ads on the Internet among millions of useless pieces of information about this vale, bought and sold for a pittance.

¹ Exodus 16:16-21

² Deuteronomy 28:64-68

*"I will save a soul without any qualms.
I ensure clothing, board and accommodation,
and a one-way ticket."*

It's hard to believe, but that's how (roughly) these inconspicuous, shocking announcements sounded. I have never known anyone who would abase himself so much. But he knows well the great worth of a life and a glimmer of hope given to those bereft of honor for a moribund corpse.

These workers of the last hour will follow into the footsteps of the baker, the tireless helper of people of great faith. They won't need explaining for the hundredth time what is faith, baptism, conversion, who is God, who are the angels and principalities, and how to find the way to the holy mountain, to the city where a brother isn't betrayed for a hundred working days' wages.

They will show up like an army to a roll-call of the fallen¹. And the works of the traffickers of human beings² and jewels of the dead will burn with their own fire of accursed talkativeness³, and their fierce and clamorous kindliness will gnash its teeth over the rapturous ones, who don't forget about the orders issued by the Almighty:

*"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,
A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed.
He who believes in it will not be disturbed."*⁴

When the cry: *"Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him."*⁵ reaches human ears, the scales of heavy sleep will fall from their eyes and the train of virgins will prepare for the way. Some of them will know the baker, other ones – only the shop shelves with everything from soup to nuts, for they had sold the bread for silver in order to procure for themselves a small joy and consolation.

They won't partake in the great one, because the companions of their earthly woes will send them where they came from – to the devil, manfully countering another temptation on the narrow way of faith:

¹ Nahum 2:3-13

² Deuteronomy 24:7; Revelation 18:7-13

³ Nahum 2:13; 3:13-19

⁴ Isaiah 28:16; Psalms 118:17-23;

Matthew 21:42-46;

Zechariah 4:8-14; 10:1-6; 12:1-6;

Revelation 11:3-13

⁵ Matthew 25:1-13

*Few lend (but fools)
Their working tools.¹*

Soon after that, the blessed ones will hear the angels' choirs and the sound of the King's harp, and none of their mouths will utter the sorcerer's incantation:

"Mirror, mirror on the wall, ain't I the fairest of us all?"²

For on this earth the prudent virgins dream only of this wedding, which will unite the guests, witnesses and the wedded for ages. God will reward them for their stubbornness and perseverance in faith in the most beautiful of tales of the princess, the prince and the dreadful dragon thrown into the abyss³.

October 3rd, 1999



Exposition

This story is an exact illustration of the intent that called the book *Jesus wanted* into existence. If, therefore, anyone feels like openly questioning the *legal basis* of my announcement, he would make a correct choice in trying to prove the absurdity of the proposition seeking merchants of the Word of God in the dealers from Jesus' parable about the ten virgins, and in the retort given to the foolish ones by the prudent – a rebuttal, worthy of great faith, of the intent of the evil one.

Every opponent of this proposition will, however, face the need of explaining the role of the dealers, which is strange here, and he won't be able to redeem his skin with anything more expensive than the suggestion, symptomatic of hypocrites, that Jesus didn't have to know exactly what He was saying, or that He left to his hearers a significant liberty in interpreting just these words.

¹ Matthew 25:8-9; quote by Thomas Tusser

² James 1:22-26; 3:13-18

³ Isaiah 14:3-27; Luke 10:17-20

Such apostasy will also be consigned to the grave by the discovering of a very big contrast with which the Master undoubtedly wanted to highlight the fact that, apart from some appearances of negligible importance, the prudent virgins have nothing in common with the foolish ones.

That is why the adjective denoting prudence¹ – as well as attention, which is always valuable in the eyes of the Galilean – is accompanied by a reference to such completely different traits of the mind as: *stupor*, (moral) *callousness*, *inadvertence* or even *insanity*². These aren't tokens of *reformable beings*, living in the real world and seeking in it signs or norms of the Kingdom of God. They rather denote a severe impairment of cognitive powers, an imminent inability to follow the guidelines of a reasonable, or even only honest will.

In the exegetical standards, the lack of clarifications for the range of meanings of the adjectives *prudent* and *foolish* serves as a shabby veil for the altogether unfounded conviction that those *foolish virgins could, through wise counsel, become wise*. It's shabby because, even if we adopt this moralizing convention in spite of Jesus, who wasn't a moralizer, it will still be short of a concept explaining the origin of the oil in the lamps of the more sober representatives of the more beautiful, but weaker sex, and with that even a reasonable explanation of the purpose that the oil was to serve.

Whereas a simple identification of the dealers with people preaching Christ for profit³ or – as the Apostle puts it – through vain-glory⁴, explains at the same time why a person honestly awaiting salvation should strive to take care of what belongs to him, and not of what belongs to someone else (the gift of the Holy Spirit, promised by faith, facilitates these efforts considerably). It also displays the thievish attempts at the good promised to the faithful who understand well that the need for solidarity invoked by the foolish virgins is an attempt to extort a part of the invisible testimony of truth.

For the prudent virgins *know well what's going on* – just like John knew that well⁵ – without unnecessary dilemmas they send their companions back to the place where they received their first and only les-

1 gr. φρονιμος

2 gr. μωρος

3 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 4:1-2

4 Philippians 2:3

5 1 John 2:18-21

sons of truth about the coming bridegroom, unknown to their hearts and thoughts. It's not *good advice*, by no means – it is the apostolic *wish of death*¹. Nominal Christians are offended by it to this very day, as most of them revile the truth because it is out of their way.

The Reader may also take into consideration the fact that the dismissal of the foolish virgins by the bridegroom himself sounds exactly like the verdict which is to – in due time – reach the ears of many prophets, teachers, miracle workers, exorcists, healers and other declared *acquaintances of the Righteous One* who gave up on *personal care*, giving access to spiritual philistinism and overt mendacity².

What is more, the ruling of the Judge of Israel in this matter, drafted by Matthew, is accompanied by a related comparison of the image of the wisdom of a builder erecting his house on a rock with the foolishness and thoughtlessness of the one designating the place for the foundation *on the beach*³.

In a word, the foolish virgins are those who obtained the right of God's children by the belief that it is worthwhile to solicit that right at a market stall, not asking the stewards of truth troublesome disciples' questions.

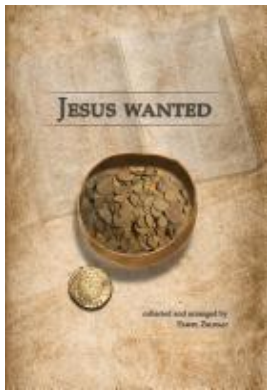
As for me, I didn't look for the answers to my questions in places even resembling the appearance of a marketplace. The Reader won't find them there either, because they threaten the most vital interest of the *Christian stock exchange* and my access means to them a risk of a serious downturn of their market ratings.

December 24th, 2011

¹ 1 Corinthians 16:22; Galatians 1:6-10

² Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 13:24-30

³ Matthew 7:24-27



Concentrating in his novelized lectures mainly on the well-known parables of Jesus, author Pawel Zelwan attempts to expose the absurdity of the concepts behind the generally accepted interpretations of the Galilean's puzzling statements. It is a book for those who value their convictions, that is to say, for those who seek a solid ground for them.

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