

BLESSED IS SHE WHO FEARS THE LORD

“The woman who fears the Lord is to be praised,”

“Blessed are you who fear the Lord.”

“Master, I knew you were a demanding person...so out of fear I buried your talent in the ground.
Here it is back”

Obviously there are different kinds of fear. Right now, the fear of the pandemic coronavirus has truly taken hold and had a long-lasting impact and effect on our lives. There is no denying that we are living in a greater sense of something to be afraid of this year, than we were at this time last year. But fear of the Lord is not at all the same as fear of the covid-19. Not even close. So, is there in our lives this fear of the Lord which is actually described as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Recently I came across an article entitled: Throwing Away Our Holy Things. In it the author, Elizabeth Scalia, r makes several points about how we do not value our holy things. Not enough. Not properly. We don't seem to have the proper reverence for ourselves or what has been entrusted to us. Allow me to read a few excerpts:

“In the next world, of course, we will answer to Christ himself. Jesus is just, but the Gospels repeatedly show us that he is also much more understanding and merciful than we humans are, and we count on that. Still, he likely will ask us why we—either through public exposure or private indulgences in morally objectionable material—have thrown our pearls before swine. Or, to put it another way, why we have tossed our *Holy Things* (in this case our bodies, which are Temples of the Holy Spirit) to the dogs.

It's worth considering how cheaply we give ourselves away, how thoughtlessly we toss our valuables—not just our bodies but our lives, our thoughts, our images, and the images of those we love—to those who will trash them. This tells others that, for all manner of reasons, we do not fully appreciate our own value. And if we do not, who else is going to?

I'm talking about how—especially on social media, where we all live and move and increasingly have our being—we thoughtlessly permit the breeching of our boundaries, physical, spiritual, and psychological. We allow ourselves to be encroached upon by others without considering that our natural or learned boundaries are not prisons but safety zones, the places reserved for ourselves and God and those most beloved to us.

Increasingly, rather than holding our dear things close, we are casting them directly into the downward stream of disposable culture.... We give away our chastity for a very temporary pleasure that brings with it a strange hollowness; with repeated behavior it can only grow into an aching void. We give away our sensible reserve, rather than be thought haughty. We give away our better instincts to kindness, in order to make the cheap joke, though when the snickers are done we must yet listen to our consciences. Everyone else has already scrolled down to the next idea, but our toss-off will stay with us in the stained recesses of our souls.

All are guilty, from time to time, of throwing away our Holy Things, and when we do it, we contribute to the coarsening of the culture, and the hardening of our own hearts. But, just as I wasn't talking about money a moment ago, I'm not really talking about our social trip-ups, either, but about my own casting aside of a Holy Thing.

As someone who has dealt with weight issues for my whole life, yo-yoing through clothes sizes spectacularly, the image of Peter sinking under the weight of his own intellectual

doubt, self-awareness, and human fear is eloquent of the near-despair I can sometimes feel about this struggle. There are times when I thank God for my weight problems because they're a handy "thorn in the flesh," a visible sin that helps to keep me humble; there is every reason to suspect that if I looked good I might be insufferable.

Most of the time, though, it's "Lord, save me." Save me from myself. Save me from the pointless act of trying to fill my own aching void with what will never satisfy. Save me from this ongoing battle.

I consider how Jesus responds to Peter by teaching him a lesson of great power and depth: that **He, the Christ, is the Holiest within the Holy Thing that is creation, and that we too are Holy Things**, able to work and walk with him within that swirling, vibrant, energetic, ever-ancient-ever-new Holiness, if only we keep our eyes on the One, ignoring the whirlwinds both exterior and interior that distract us, shake our faith and ultimately sink us.

Thinking about the Holy Thing of creation means thinking about the Holy Thing that is our perfectly designed body. I have for too long tossed my Holy Thing to the dogs of appetite, marketing, impulse, expediency, poorly healed wounds, excuses and recent sloth. I am determined to stop. It's a plan of restoration of things into rightness, isn't it?

Thus, an old battle is being re-engaged with a weapon of new understanding. And each day I pray that Christ be pleased to carry out within me the restoration he has planned for all creation—that I can run the race with my Holy Thing reclaimed, restored, and surrendered in trust, until I am finished, and like a libation poured out

My friends, there is nothing that Our Lord cannot do for us, or do within us if we want him to and allow him to. But we do not always believe this. We do not always put our faith in the Living God. We do not always believe that there is something here, something really valuable, really important, really worthwhile, really a holy thing that should not be tossed to the swine or thrown to the dogs. There are moments when we are like the man who buried what he had been given. There are times when we just do not believe in ourselves as that place where God wants his grace to be planted and to grow. There are times when we lack that reverence for ourselves and for the person our God has created and designed us to be. We believe more in our sinfulness than in the power of God's transforming grace.

There are times when we have not had a reverential fear of the Lord, daring to believe what he wants for us and wants to accomplish in us. Still, my friends, it does not all depend on us. Some of it does. We do have to allow the Lord into our lives to heal what needs healing, to encourage what needs encouragement, to lead us where we need to be led, to help us believe when our trust is weak. Let us today choose to place our faith in God, be awed, be amazed at who he is and what he is doing in us. And dare to believe in the power of his grace available always. And have a genuine deep reverence and awe of the Lord but not be afraid of anything else.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.