

Saint John Chrysostom (c.345-407), Bishop of Antioch then of Constantinople, Doctor of the Church

Homily on the man who owed ten thousand talents, 3; PG 51, 21

"Then who can be saved?"

A rich man came to Christ and questioned him about eternal life, but on learning the high cost of attaining perfection, he went away in sorrow because of his great wealth. Then, when Christ said that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a person of wealth to enter the kingdom of heaven, Peter, although he had stripped himself of everything and no longer owned even a fishing hook, since he had abandoned his fishing tackle and his boat, went up to Christ and asked: «Who then can be saved? »

Notice both the restraint of the disciple and his zeal. He did not say: «You are commanding the impossible. This requirement is too difficult; this law is too hard." Neither did he remain silent, but with the respect owed by a disciple to his master he asked: «Who then can be saved? » Even before he was made a shepherd he had the heart of a shepherd; even before he was entrusted with authority... his concern was for the whole world. If Peter had been a wealthy man endowed with great possessions, one might have said his concern was not for others but for himself and his own interests when he asked this question. In fact, however, his poverty clears him of any such suspicion, and proves that it was concern for the salvation of others that made him reflect upon the way of salvation and anxiously inquire about it, desiring to learn about it from the Master.

And so to encourage him Christ answered that what was impossible for human nature was possible for God. He said: "Do not think you have been abandoned. In a matter of such importance I myself will be your helper, and I will make what is difficult simple and easy. »