



by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:8-10

The mystery of the universe is revealed in this simple parable. If we take it literally, it evokes bewilderment. The woman lost only one drachma. But even ten drachmas do not represent a great sum; in fact, a woman who has only ten drachmas must be very poor indeed...How is it that if she is such a poor woman she lights lamps and sweeps the house and – strangest of all – calls in all her friends and neighbors to share her joy? And all because of one drachma! ...But then, if she invites her neighbors, according to Eastern custom, she is obliged to offer them something to eat and drink, no small expense for a poor woman. ...She invited many friends and neighbors, and even if she entertained them modestly, the expense would far exceed the value of the drachma she found...

So let us try to find [the parable’s] hidden meaning. Who is the woman? And why is it a woman and not a man...Whose house is it?...Who are her friends and neighbors?...The Lord said, Seek and you shall find!...

The woman represents Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God. The ten drachmas are His. It is He Who has lost one of them and sets out to look for it. The drachmas are not coins of gold or silver. According to Orthodox theology, the number ten represents fullness. The nine unlost drachmas are the nine orders of angels. The number of angels is beyond the grasp of mortals, for it exceeds our power of calculation. The lost drachma represents mankind in its entirety.

Therefore, Christ the Saviour came down from heaven to earth, to His house, and lit a candle, the light of the knowledge of Himself. He cleaned out the house

– that is, He purified the world of diabolic impurity – and found the lost drachma: erring and lost humanity. Then He called His ‘friends and neighbors’ (after His glorious Resurrection and Ascension) that is to say, all the countless hosts of the Cherubim and Seraphim, Angels and Archangels, and revealed to them His great joy...That means: I have found men to fill the void in the Kingdom of Heaven caused by the fall of the proud angels who apostasized from God. At the end of time, the number of these found and saved souls will have grown to billions, or in the language of Scripture, will be as countless as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.

Our Lord described Himself as a woman because women are more careful than men in looking after property, in keeping the house in order and in receiving guests. If this short parable, which consists of only two sentences, is explained in this way, whose heart will not be touched? For it contains the whole tragedy of the world, visible and invisible. It explains why the Son of God came to earth. It sheds a bright ray of light on the history of mankind and the tragedy of every separate individual’s existence. It confronts us with an urgent decision, because our life is swiftly passing – a decision as to whether we want to be the lost drachma found by Christ or not. Christ is looking for us. Are we going to hide from Him or let ourselves be found by Him before death hides us from Him, from the world and from life? It is a vital question and it lies within our will to accept or reject Him. After death it will cease to be an open question, and then no one will expect an answer from us.