

HE WHO GIVES TO THE POOR LOANS TO GOD

—*from the sermons of St. John Chrysostom*—

“And what do I have to gain if I loan to You?” someone may ask.

“I will give you one-hundred times more in this life, and everlasting life in the age to come,” God replies.

When and how exactly will God, Who borrowed money for the poor, repay your loan? Listen: **“When the Son of Man comes and sits on the throne of His glory, then He will set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on the left. Then He will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”** Why? **“Because I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me” (Mt. 25:31-36).** At that moment, they who looked after Him will ask, **“Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?” (Mt. 25:37).** “When did we see You, Whom everyone looks to for help, in such a state of need and hardship? And when did we offer You all this?” **“Assuredly,”** Christ replies, **“since you did it to one of the least of My brethren, you did it Me” (Mt. 25:40).** Do you still doubt if this saying, “he who gives to the poor loans to God,” is true or not?

Just as He will gift the Kingdom of Heaven to them on the right on account of alms, similarly, He will punish them on the left on account of their callousness: **“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”** Why? **“Because I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink” (Mt. 25:41-42).** God does not accuse them of fornication, or adultery, or stealing, or bearing false witness, or swearing. These are clearly destructive evils as well; however, they are less sinful than callousness and indifference.

Why, O Lord, do you not make reference to anything else? “Because,” He says, “I am not condemning them for their sin, but for their inhumanity. I am not condemning them who sinned, but them who did not repent. I am condemning you on account of your heartlessness! Because you had ample potent medicine at your disposal—namely, alms—yet, you totally disregarded and misused this gift. Hence, I am censuring and denouncing your callousness, which is the root of evil and the source of all impiety. On the contrary, I commend almsgiving, which is the root of all good things. And so, I condemn to an eternal fire and unending hell humans who are unmerciful and inhuman, whereas I grant the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life to them who are merciful and compassionate.