

WE MUST BE HAPPY WITH WHAT GOD GIVES US

—from the writings of St. Silouan the Athonite—

A certain hunter greatly enjoyed roaming through forests and plains in search of wild game. One day while hunting, after walking for a long time up a high mountain, he became tired and sat to rest on a large boulder. As he was sitting there, he noticed a flock of birds flying from one mountain peak to another, and he thought, “Why didn’t God give wings to man, so he can also fly?”

At that moment, a humble hermit happened to be walking by that same area. Having perceived the hunter’s thoughts, he turned to him and said, “You are wondering why God did not give you wings? ... Let’s say that He gives you wings; you will still not be satisfied but will say, ‘My wings are weak and with them I cannot ascend up to heaven to see what exists there.’ And if you are given wings strong enough to ascend into heaven, even then you will be unsatisfied and you will say, ‘I don’t understand what is happening here.’ And if you are granted such understanding, again you will not be content, and you will question, ‘Why am I not an angel?’ And if they make you an angel, even then you will be displeased and you will say, ‘Why am I not a Cherubim?’ And if you were to become a Cherubim, then you will say, ‘Why doesn’t God allow me to govern Heaven?’ And if you are given authority to rule over Heaven, even then you will not be content, and as someone else did [i.e. Lucifer] you will indignantly ask for more things. This is why you should always humble yourself and be happy with whatever is given to you, and then you will dwell with God.”

The hunter realized that the hermit had spoken the truth, and he thanked God for sending this elder to correct him and teach him the way of humility.