

## PSALM 119

*A Song of Ascent<sup>1</sup>*

1. Before the Lord I cried out in my affliction, and he heard me.
2. Save my soul, O Lord, from the lips of the corrupt,  
and from the tongue of the deceitful.
3. What should be given to thee, and what more should be offered,  
against the crafty tongue?
4. The weapons of the mighty should be sharpened  
with live coals of the wilderness.
5. Woe is me, for my sojourning is prolonged,  
as I have lodged among the tents of Kedar<sup>2</sup>.
6. Long has my soul been a wanderer.
7. Among them that hated peace, I was peaceable.  
When I spoke to them,  
they warred against me without cause.

This is the first psalm of Kathisma XVIII. This entire Kathisma is said during the Presanctified Liturgy, as we “ascend” from the period of the Menaion and on weekdays the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts replaces the Divine Liturgy during the period of Great Lent to Pascha.

<sup>1</sup> This Psalm 119 and the following psalms through Psalm 133 are titled *Songs of Ascent* [ᾠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν] because they were sung by the Hebrews as they ascended up the mount to Jerusalem on their high holidays when this journey was a pilgrimage for them to the Temple. The entire Kathisma XVIII is read after The Lighting of the Lamps during the Kathismata as a sign of our ascent through Great Lent to Pascha.

<sup>2</sup> The Kedars were a nomadic people of swarthy complexion who had apparently strayed out of Arabia into Israel.

Compiled by John P. Nasou, M.D.

## SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ἡ Ναός τῆς Αγίας Σοφίας τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

June 13, 2010

Third Sunday of Matthew

The Tone for this day is the Second

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. 3

Mark 16:9-20

Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them. Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen

**PROKEIMENON:**            **The Lord is my strength and my song.**  
**The Lord has chastened me sorely.** Psalm 117: 14 + 18

### **The Epistle is from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 5:1-11**

BRETHREN, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man -- though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.

### **The Gospel is from Matthew 6:22-33**

THE LORD SAID, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

*From St. John Chrysostom's Homily on this Gospel Reading*

***For what can be more alarming than what He now says, if indeed we are for our riches to fall from the service of Christ? Or what more to be desired, if indeed, by despising wealth, we shall have our affection towards Him and our charity perfect? For what I am continually repeating, the same do I now say likewise, namely, that by both kinds He presses the hearer to obey His sayings; both by the profitable, and by the hurtful; much like an excellent physician, pointing out both the disease which is the consequence of neglect, and the good health which results from obedience.***

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Today's Gospel Lesson is a part of the well-known Sermon on the Mount. Practically the entire reading is concerned with the Divine Providence of God towards man, and towards creation as a whole. How should we explain this? Wisely the Church tells us this: "The Lord said," to begin each Gospel Lesson. When the Lord Himself speaks, who can have a differing opinion? If anyone does disagree, his arguments are false, based upon purely human logic; while "the word of the Lord" abides for ever."

Christ, then, says, "Take no care." Perhaps many will misunderstand. How can we live without taking care, without planning ahead? Society and financial prosperity would be destroyed. St. Chrysostom writes that Christ did not condemn work; rather, He condemned the worship of work, and of its profits to the complete neglecting of our spiritual responsibilities. Thus, Christ condemns most of our society today. Such care, far from adding to the fullness of our lives, robs us of our health and vitality, and makes us slaves to our business. Much of that for which we exercise great care is not only not good for us, it is downright harmful. And what irony! The Gospel says, "Take no thought as to what you will have to wear." Now, Jesus was not advocating nudity when He said that. He meant that we should avoid preoccupation with our dress. Many demented clothes-horses (particularly women) would die before they would wear the same outfit twice.

A psalmist urges us to trust in the Lord, "and He shall feed thee." By this the psalmist does not mean that we should fold our hands and wait for God to rain manna from heaven. The word of God nowhere teaches such utter folly. We are to work, but simultaneously to entrust ourselves to the loving care of our Heavenly Father. Shall He who cares for the birds, for the wild flowers of the field, abandon those whom He has created in His image and likeness? Our Gospel Lesson ends with this superb verse: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

**Condensed from "Orthodox Sermons" By Rev. George Dimopoulos**