

PSALM 121

A Song of Ascent

1. I rejoiced when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."
2. Jerusalem! Our feet are standing in your courts.
3. Jerusalem, built to be a city, is herself in agreement with this.
4. For there the tribes ascended, the tribes of the Lord, a testimony to Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.
5. For there thrones are placed for judgment, thrones for the house of David.
6. Therefore pray for peace for Jerusalem, and prosperity for those that love you.
7. Let there be peace for your hosts, and prosperity in your palace fortifications.
8. On behalf of my brethren and my neighbors, I have spoken about peace for you.
9. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I have sought nothing but good for you.

This is the third psalm within Kathisma XVIII. It is sung during the Service of the Refectory. A refectory is the dining hall of monasteries and there is a definite service that is conducted before and during each meal.

Psalms 119 and the following psalms through Psalm 133 are titled *Songs of Ascent* [Ὕμνοι 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. All of these psalms are read during the Kathismata of the Presanctified Liturgy as a sign of our ascent through Great Lent to Pascha.

Compiled by John P. Nasou, M.D.

SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ὁ Ναός τῆς Αγίας Σοφίας τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

June 27, 2010

Fifth Sunday of Matthew

The Tone for this day is the Fourth

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. 5

Luke 24:12-35

At that time, Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

PROKEIMENON

O Lord, how magnificent are your works! You have made all things in wisdom.
Bless the Lord, O my soul. Psalm 103:24 + 1

The Epistle is from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 10:1-10

BRETHREN, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified. Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.

The Gospel Reading is from Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1

AT THAT TIME, when Jesus came to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one would pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood. And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city.

What Does St. John Chrysostom Have To Say About Today's Epistle?

For here he calls his exceeding desire, and the prayer which he makes, a "heart's desire." For it is not the being freed from punishment only, but that they may also be saved, that he makes so great a point of, and prays for He shows the goodwill that He hath towards them. Ought not this then to be a ground for pardoning and not for accusing them? For if it is not of man that they are separated, but through zeal, they deserved to be pitied rather than punished. But observe how adroitly He favors them "for they being ignorant," He says, "of God's righteousness." "And going about," He says, "to establish their own righteousness, have not the righteousness of God." With wisdom so befitting Him, He calls it their "own righteousness," either because the Law was no longer of force, or because it was one of trouble and toil. But this He calls God's righteousness, that from faith, because it comes entirely from the grace from above, and because men are justified in this case, not by labors, but by the gift of God.

He says the creation is "recapitulated" in Christ. Much to the same purpose, of the recapitulation or consummation of iniquity in Antichrist; the word is the same. But He that rejects this, falls short as well of that also. For if Christ be "the end of the Law," he that hath not Christ, even if he seem to have that righteousness, has it not. But he that has Christ, even though he have not fulfilled the Law aright, has received the whole. For what was the object of the Law? To make man righteous. But it had not the power, for no one fulfilled it. Next, since this was an assertion, He again brings proof of it from the Scriptures (verse 5).

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaks in this wise (ver. 6 to 9), that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved (verse 10).

To prevent the Jews then from saying, How came they who had not found the lesser righteousness to find the greater? He gives a reason there was no answering, that this way was easier than that. For that requires the fulfillment of all things (for when you doest all, then you shalt live); but the righteousness which is of faith does not say this, but what?

After this presentation of the faith-idea in Old Testament language, which all might not grasp, He presents the message of the gospel in unmistakable terms in verses 9 & 10. It includes two points, (1) confession, (2) faith, and the object of both is stated. It is Christ. Confess Christ; believe heartily in his resurrection (which would carry belief in all the essential facts of his life and person with itself). And then, reversing the order, and throwing them into special prominence, He repeats the assurance that faith and confession conduct to the true goal.