

PSALM 125

A Song of Ascent

1. When the Lord returned the captivity of Sion, we had taken courage.
2. Then our mouth was filled with joy, and our tongue exulted.
Then they would say to the Gentiles,
The Lord has increased what He has worked among them.
3. The Lord has expanded His works among us, we have become joyful.
4. The Lord has reversed our captivity, like the rivers in the south.*
 5. They that had sowed in tears shall reap wildly in joy.
 6. They went about sowing and weeping as they cast their seeds;
but they are arriving improved with exultation,
bearing their sheaves with them.

This is the seventh psalm of Kathisma XVIII.

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

* In reference to the flow of the river Nile to the north. All other rivers known to the Israelites flowed south.

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SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ὁ Ναός τῆς Αγίας Σοφίας τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

July 25, 2010

Ninth Sunday of Matthew

The Tone for this day is Plagal 4

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. 9

John 20:19-31

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld." Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin,¹ was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

**PROKEIMENON: Make your vows to the Lord our God, and perform them.
God is known in Judah; His name is great in Israel. Psalm 75: 11 + 1**

The Epistle is from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 3:9-17

BRETHREN, we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder. I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

The Gospel Lesson is from Matthew 14:22-34

AT THAT TIME, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they entered the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.

From the Homily by St. John Chrysostom On today's Epistle Reading

And say not unto me, "where is the rule of justice preserved entire, if the punishment has no end?" Rather, when God does any thing, obey His decisions and submit not what is said to human reasonings. But moreover, how can it be any thing else than just for one who has experienced innumerable blessings from the beginning, and then committed deeds worthy of punishment, and neither by threat nor benefit improved at all, to suffer punishment? For if thou enquire what is absolute justice; it was meet that we should have perished immediately from the beginning, according to the definition of strict justice. Rather not even then according to the rule of justice only; for the result would have had in it kindness too, if we had suffered this also. For when any one insults him that has done him no wrong, according to the rule of justice he suffers punishment: but when it is his benefactor, who, bound by no previous favor, bestowed innumerable kindnesses, who alone is the Author of his being, who is God, who breathed his soul into him, who gave ten thousand gifts of grace, whose will is to take him up into heaven;—when, I say, such an one, after so great blessings, is met by insult, daily insult, in the conduct of the other party; how can that other be thought worthy of pardon? Do you not see how He punished Adam for one single sin?

But since Paul's saying appears to some to tell the other way, come let us bring it forward also and search it out thoroughly. For having said, "If any man's work abide which he has built thereon, he shall receive a reward; and if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss," he adds, "but himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire." What shall we say then to this? Let us consider first what is "the Foundation," and what "the gold," and what "the precious stones," and what "the hay," and what the "stubble." "The Foundation," then, he has himself plainly signified to be Christ, saying, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which," he says "is Jesus Christ."

PROKEIMENON:

God is wonderful among his saints.
Bless God in the congregations. Psalm 67:35 + 26

**The Epistle is from Paul's letter to the Galatians 4:22-27
Commemorating the Repose of St. Anna, Mother of the Theotokos**

BRETHREN, Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in travail; for the children of the desolate one are many more than the children of her that is married."

The Life and Repose of Saint Anna

St. Joachim was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of King David. Anna was the daughter of Matthan the priest, of the tribe of Levi as was Aaron the High Priest. Matthan had three daughters: Mary, Zoia and Anna. Mary was married in Bethlehem and bore Salome; Zoia was also married in Bethlehem and bore Elisabeth, the mother of St. John the Forerunner; and Anna was married in Nazareth to Joachim, and in old age gave birth to Mary, the most holy Mother of God. Joachim and Anna had been married for fifty years, and were barren. They lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple, and they were well provided for. Once, when they were already old and were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim, "You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands." Others who had children jostled Joachim, thrusting him back as unworthy. This caused great grief to the two aged souls, and they went home with very heavy hearts. Then the two of them gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort their old age. God sent them His angel, who gave them tidings of the birth of "a daughter most blessed, by whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and through whom will come the salvation of the world." Anna conceived at once, and in the ninth month gave birth to the holy Virgin Mary. Saints Joachim and Anna took Mary, at the age of three, to the temple to be dedicated to the service of the Lord, and presented her to the priest Zechariah. The parents then, after offering up her sacrifice to the Lord according to the custom of the time, left the Virgin in the temple to be brought up therein. The Church commemorates the Presentation of the Theotokos on November 21. St. Joachim lived for eighty years and Anna for seventy-nine, and they both entered into the kingdom of God before the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos. The Dormition feast day of St. Anna is celebrated on July 25.

Apolytikion

Divinely-wise Anna, you carried in your womb the pure Mother of God,
who gave life to our Life.

Therefore, you are now carried joyfully to the inheritance of heaven,
To the abode of those who rejoice in glory,
Where you seek forgiveness of sins for those
who faithfully honor you, ever blessed one.

Kontakion

We celebrate the memory of the progenitors of Christ,
And with faith we ask their help,
That deliverance from every affliction be granted to those who cry out:
"Be with us, O God, who in Your good pleasure glorified them."